Book No.
B H1246s

Accession
295833

Form 16 30M 8-31

SAN FRANCISCO PUBLIC LIBRARY
3 1223 00334 6211

DATE DUE

NOV - 9 1981			
SFPL	JAN 19 '83		
MAR 13 '84			

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS WITH EARL HAIG

By

SERGT. T. SECRETT, M.M.

New York DUFFIELD & COMPANY 1929

B
H12461
295833

Made and Printed in Great Britain
The Gainsborough Press, St. Albans. Fisher, Knight & Co., Ltd.

PREFACE

ALTHOUGH I was only an ordinary soldier, it has been my good fortune to see the inner lives of the greatest military chiefs of the day. I have had the honour of being the personal servant of the great Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, Earl Haig, for twenty-five years. During that long period I was only absent from him for seven days. Otherwise, at every hour of the day I was near him, and at nights I lay somewhere within call in case I was required.

I watched my late master rise from the rank of a colonel, as he was when I joined him in Africa away back in 1900, to the highest rank of Field-Marshal. I accompanied him over the dreary wastes of the African veld when he commanded an independent column of cavalry, fighting random battles against small detachments of Boers which the guerrilla warfare necessitated.

It was my privilege to accompany him later both in India, where he was appointed Inspector-General of Cavalry in 1903, and at Aldershot, where he succeeded to the Aldershot Command in 1912.

It has been my lot to attend personally on King George, King Albert of Belgium, the President of France, the Prince of Wales, the Japanese Crown Prince, M. Clémenceau—the old Tiger of France—two Prime Ministers, every great British general of the War years, besides the great French generals, Joffre, Foch, Pétain, and Antoine.

I have stood by the side of my late master when he was under the fire of Boer snipers in Africa; I have been with him as he rode through the Flanders mud with shells bursting around him. I have stood terrified outside his room door in a Flanders château, when half the house had gone and every map was covered with glass splinters from shattered windows—terrified for him!

I have carried him in my arms down the stairs of a little Landrecies house during the terrible retreat days following Mons, when the Germans literally were on our heels.

I have seen a Prime Minister with upraised shaking hand tell his great friend, the Commander-in-Chief, with accents choked with emotion, that the battle of Jutland was the bitterest disappointment of his life. I have seen a great French *generalissimo* come to Haig's headquarters in almost abject terror of what he feared was to happen in a few hours, and I have seen my late master comfort and support him and send him away reassured and strengthened.

Under the Indian sun, through Flanders rains, in defeat and victory I have accompanied him. I have waited at cross-roads, holding his horse when we awaited news of the fall of a vital spot in the line, news, happily, which never came, and I have marched with him in triumph through Paris, through London and Edinburgh—greatest joy of all to him.

Alas! I have also had to walk, with my old friend his charger, through the streets of London, funeral music filling my ears, muffled drums beating, which did but echo the heavy drum-beats of my own heart, for there in front of me, honourably draped in the flag he loved so well and served so brilliantly, was

the coffin of my comrade and master of all the long years.

The mourning multitudes thronged the streets. They watched the passing of a great general, a mighty victor, whose photograph they had often seen and whose praises they had heard voiced. But I was accompanying my old friend, as well as master, on his last journey.

The cortège passed into Whitehall, and with melancholy precision the Horse Guards saluted their idol for the last time, but my mind was far away. I thought of the Khyber Pass and the wild Frontier where I had spent many a happy day's hunting with him: into Parliament Square, but I remembered the lonely *kopjes* of the African veld, and his joy when we were joined by Boer sportsmen, after the war was over, in a united hunt for buck: into the Abbey, and there were the great ones of the earth—the King, the Princes, the Field-Marshals, the generals and admirals, the dignitaries of Church and State—there were few among them who had not cracked a joke with me, humble Sergeant Secrett, in happier days when they had visited the great soldier they now mourned.

I remember, in the solemn dimness of the Valhalla of the Empire, as I listened to the beautiful service and heard the melodious voice of the Dean, feeling thankful, somehow, that I was not to leave my master there. Lord Haig was so essentially an open-air man that it would have seemed cruel, imprisoning, to leave him in the great cloistered Abbey. No, when we finally took leave of him it was in the beautiful ruined abbey grounds near his family home of Bemersyde where, the Northern mists rolling gently over his grassy grave, he lies in the midst of the countryside he loved so dearly :

> Tyde, Tyde, whate'er betyde,
> Haig will be aye of Bemersyde !

So quotes the old motto on the stone stump at Bemersyde, which I have seen so often.

Surely Haig of Bemersyde lives to-day ! He lives in the heart of every soldier who ever came into personal contact with him. He lives in the heart of that great organization to which he devoted his later life—the British Legion. In many senses Haig *was* the Legion !

And it is in great measure because of the

love Haig had for the Legion and legionnaires that I am writing this book. There are many eminent historians who have written about Haig, the battles he fought and the victories he won, but these eminent gentlemen write in an abstract sense. Their histories are valuable and excellent works, but to them, the Commander-in-Chief whom they seldom met—or very rarely saw—is little more than a mere name. Details are given of arrangements for battles, and the battles described accurately, but the person of the Commander-in-Chief seems to be so far away as to appear almost soulless. The human side of the man is rarely given.

But I, who saw the anguish of the Commander-in-Chief when precious British lives were being lost, who saw his joy in victory, who stood by him while he personally ministered to wounded Tommies, can tell another side, and it is because the story of Haig, the man, is bound to be of interest to every man who served under him and to every member of the British Legion, that I have consented to write this book, and herein relate exactly what manner of man this great commander was.

Although the most important part of Haig's life was concerned with the Great War, yet the story of the days before it is not without interest. Therefore, as I think it right to observe some chronological order, I will begin at the beginning and tell the story of how I first met him in Africa and there took service with him.

T.S.

1929

CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	SOUTH AFRICA	21
II.	SOUTH AFRICA (continued)	33
III.	INDIAN DAYS	39
IV.	INDIAN DAYS (continued)	51
V.	HAIG THE MAN	63
VI.	WAR	74
VII.	A HOLY SPY	83
VIII.	DISDAIN AND DANGER	97
IX.	A DAY OF TERROR	107
X.	THE HAND OF HAIG	114
XI.	EXCEPTION TO THE RULE	127
XII.	AMONG THE TOMMIES	141
XIII.	THE SINGING COLONEL	154
XIV.	ODD STORIES	167
XV.	MORE ODD STORIES	181
XVI.	A CAPITAL JOKE	197
XVII.	THE MULE SPOILT IT	205
XVIII.	VISITORS TO G.H.Q.	220
XIX.	MORE VISITORS TO G.H.Q.	232
XX.	A CANADIAN "INCIDENT"	245
XXI.	EARL HAIG AND THE POLITICIANS	258
XXII.	SOUTH AFRICA AND THE COLONIAL TOUR	266
XXIII.	EARL HAIG AT HOME	276

LIST OF PLATES

The Late Field-Marshal Earl Haig, O.M., K.T., G.C.B., G.C.V.O. . . . . *Frontispiece*

Facing page

South African battlefields revisited . . . 30

A happy snapshot of Lord Haig, with Lady Haig and his aide-de-camp, on holiday during his Indian days 60

For a time Haig's headquarters in France . . 100

Presenting prizes at Aldershot 142

Earl Haig with his staff on manœuvres . . 178

A halt in the "Rockies" in Canada during the World Tour 222

Roughing it in Newfoundland during the World Tour 268

TWENTY-FIVE YEARS WITH EARL HAIG

CHAPTER I

SOUTH AFRICA

I SUPPOSE it is a rare thing for a one-time enemy commander to become something of a hero with those against whom his arms were once directed. Rarer still, perhaps, for such a commander consistently and sincerely to express admiration and respect for his enemy while at war. Yet all this applied positively to Colonel Haig, as he was, when I first began to serve him, in 1900.

I have heard high officers sometimes express impatience when Haig openly expressed his admiration of some cute move on the part of De Wet, some brilliant bit of work on the part of a small Boer force which had brought off an ambush, or the excellent marksmanship of the holders of some lonely *kopje*.

"Haig, you're a regular Pro-Boer!" one laughingly twitted him one day.

"Not a bit," laughed Haig in return, "but you can't get away from the fact that these are wonderful fellows. Many of them are grey-bearded; they have the physique of athletes, they shoot like prize-marksmen; they play the game like sportsmen. When this wretched business ends I only hope I have the opportunity to join some of them in a shooting expedition, or play polo with some of their brilliant riders."

It is not surprising, in view of the attitude of the future Commander-in-Chief of the British Army, that Haig had many dear friends in the Union of South Africa.

I shall never forget the morning I was first attached to Haig.

I had acted as personal servant to the Hon. Cecil Bingham, of the Life Guards. He returned to England in 1900 and I saw him off at the station at Johannesburg; then I returned to Bettelhein Farm, where I was instructed to report to Colonel Haig, Chief-of-Staff to General French.

Haig met me and, from the first moment, I knew that I should like him. He handed

over his keys, made one or two remarks about what he required done, smiled, and left me. Most other officers would have gone into a lot of detail, asked a lot of questions, directed minutely how they wanted things done. Haig was not a bit like that. He trusted his staff implicitly, from the lowest to the highest rank. He said what he wanted done, and he left it to the staff to get it done. He trusted to their intelligence to do the job in the best manner possible, but he never worried them in the process. He went by results.

In Africa, Haig was essentially a cavalryman, and, though he was accounted a brilliant Chief-of-Staff, he was more in his element when he had an independent column under his own control during the months of guerilla warfare which followed the return of Lord Roberts to England.

I do not intend to go over the war-days of South Africa, the history of which often has been written up thoroughly. Lord Haig himself always frowned when people tried to discuss the South African War with him—he wanted to forget it.

I recall, for instance, the meeting between Colonel Haig and General Botha's wife at

Pretoria during the Boer War, and Haig's care that she should receive every possible courtesy and consideration. Again, I remember seeing the wife of the late President Kruger. She was installed in a house near a big red church, which was guarded by the Guards Brigade. It was reported that some ribald and insulting cartoons had been posted nearby, and Haig at once ordered them to be taken down and the lady saluted with proper respect.

With the conduct of the long-protracted struggle, Haig took the general view that General Buller was unfortunate in not having anything like the supplies necessary, or asked for. I know that the late Marshal always felt sorry for Sir Redvers Buller. It always struck me as strange how popular Buller was amongst the troops in Africa, for Tommies are rather cruel people, in some respects. Let a general appear to fail, and there is a universal yell of derision and contempt. The heroes of the Army are the great victors. Yet, in Buller's case, though his failure was recognized, great sympathy was extended to him.

It is not a very romantic solution, but

I rather think the fact that the late general was a very genial, and an unusually generous, man had a good deal to do with it. I am told that when Buller was at Aldershot he spent money like water for the comfort and entertainment of the troops.

Another vivid memory I have is of the night when General Smuts surrendered. It has been my fortune to see some very eminent Army commanders surrender in France and Belgium, but it is always nerve-rattling to watch a commander acknowledging defeat.

Still, I can safely say that the manner in which Haig and Smuts met was of such an order as to ensure that there were going to be no seeds of lasting bitterness sown. Haig was a man who had the capacity for showing in the expression of his face exactly what he felt, and when the stern, penetrating eyes of the South African commander were fixed on those of the English colonel, they read nothing there but great respect and genuine sympathy. The two men shook hands, and I knew that in that handshake they had consolidated their friendship for ever.

That night we had a little jollification at

Haig's headquarters. There was no question of putting the Boer boys behind barbed wire. We all got together and had a singsong, a smoke and a feed.

Then, when hostilities were finally over, Haig got what he had long desired—good sport with his ex-enemies. We went up-country and undertook a few weeks' shooting of buck and other game.

Polo matches were arranged between our crack team—the Seventh Hussars, which Haig captained—and South African teams, and some excellent matches were played. Before I accompanied Haig home in 1902, he had made many firm friends in Africa, with whom he corresponded for the rest of his life.

Haig yielded not an inch in his confidence in the future of Africa to men like Cecil Rhodes and other great pioneers. The cardinal point of difference between them was that Haig thoroughly understood and appreciated the Boer character, and admired it, whereas the Rhodes school sought to "Britainize" South Africa. History since has proved who was right.

When the Great War broke out, there were

quite a number of Staff officers who expected a serious conflagration in South Africa, but Haig was never one of them. He would listen to what they said, then, with a quiet smile, reply :

"You don't know the sportsmen of the veld as I do, or you wouldn't talk like that."

Even when the Nationalist rebellion broke out, Haig never wavered in his confidence.

"You have irreconcilables everywhere," he said. "You could have the same thing happen in London." Then he made what might afterwards have been considered a prophetic remark :

"If you have no more trouble in Ireland than you are going to have in Africa, you'll do very well."

Even during the years we spent in India, when Haig was Inspector-General of Indian Cavalry, he always kept up his correspondence with the friends he had made in Africa, and frequently perused African papers, taking a very lively interest in the affairs of the colony.

He hailed the 1906 measure of self-government introduced by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman as a great act of statesmanship,

when many generals were crying piteously about the "Twilight of the Empire".

Upon the occasion when he was on a big-game shooting expedition in India, the talk round the campfire turned on accurate shooting at long range. One member of the party considered that the tribesmen of the troubled area beyond the Khyber Pass were wonderful marksmen.

"I should back the Boer to beat him every time," said Haig with finality.

When the war in France had been waging several months, the son of General Botha arrived and was immediately appointed by Haig to be an A.D.C. on his staff. The Commander-in-Chief frequently chatted with young Botha and had a very high opinion of him.

When the critical days came, when the roads were blocked with hurrying ambulances, and faces at Headquarters were long, there came to Marshal Haig inspiration and encouragement in the person of General Botha.

I am proud to be able to say that General Botha remembered me and shook hands with me. The effect of his visit upon the Marshal was apparent. They talked together long and

privately, and I had instructions to admit none to his presence except certain defined people. The great African general visited Lord Haig upon several occasions, and was one of the very few visitors—General Smuts was another—privileged to actually stay on the Marshal's train, which constituted his headquarters.

Nearly all visitors were billeted at a château near Montreuil, which sometimes formed Haig's headquarters, but the real G.H.Q. was a train of fourteen coaches in which travelled the Commander-in-Chief and his personal staff. This train was shunted into a siding; telephones connected it and the various Army headquarters and reporting stations. The engine was always ready to dash off to a distant part of the line at a moment's notice.

General Botha accompanied Haig on several inspections, travelling with him in the staff car and sometimes on horseback. When they took leave of each other one could plainly see that it was a leave-taking between very close friends.

General Botha's death came to Haig as a deep blow, and he immediately shut himself

up alone for a while, then personally wrote to Mrs. Botha.

The several visits of General Smuts to Haig's headquarters were great occasions. It is difficult to describe what I felt upon these occasions, but I will try. You cannot be for many years the personal servant of a great man, at his call day and night, without sharing, in a humble way, in his joys and sorrows.

When I used to watch Haig and Smuts I used to take a sort of indefinable personal pride in the situation. I remembered that night years ago, under the African stars, when the great African had offered his sword to my master, and now here they both were, far greater men than ever, my master Commander-in-Chief of the most wonderful Army the world had ever seen, and General Smuts wearing the same uniform, the greatest of Africans!

I felt a very proud man, and, though a servant was attached to General Smuts, there were certain odd jobs that I insisted upon doing, such as giving his buttons a rub and putting a last touch to his jack-boots and spurs.

SOUTH AFRICAN BATTLEFIELDS REVISITED

[*To face page* 30

Haig paid a special visit to inspect the African contingent when it arrived in France, and recognized some old faces. The late Commander-in-Chief was very remarkable in that respect; he could carry images of faces in his mind for years. I have seen him pick out an old Indian cavalryman and claim his acquaintance when he could not possibly have seen him for fifteen years.

Whenever he was recognized by an ex-soldier, the Field-Marshal invariably stopped, whether he was walking, driving, or riding, and returned his greeting.

This was very embarrassing to me one day. It was after the War and Haig was paying a visit to his cousin at St. Mannix, in Ireland. The civil war was at its height. The Four Courts in Dublin had just been shelled, and it was very unsafe for a British officer to show his face in Ireland at all.

Some had suggested that the Commander-in-Chief on his private visit should either take an unusual route or defer his visit. But Haig would have none of it. True, he travelled in mufti, but he was one of the easiest men to recognize. I was particularly nervous in his behalf because he had recently been making

strong pleas for the Irish ex-servicemen—pleas which did not make him popular with certain factions in Ireland.

To my horror he insisted upon walking through the streets of Dublin. I kept close to his side, and I held something ready in my pocket in case of accident. Presently I heard a shout :

"By — ! it's Haig !" Instantly there was a rush of several men to the Marshal. One of them put his hand out. Haig smiled and immediately took it. Others pressed around. There were some sullen faces in the crowd—some murmuring. I trembled for his safety. I stopped a cab and tried to get him towards it, but the Marshal could be very stubborn ! He dug his toes in the ground, so to speak, and would not budge !

At last some of the ex-servicemen saw the danger and assisted me to get him into the cab.

CHAPTER II

SOUTH AFRICA (CONT.)

ONE of the greatest worries that Haig—always the most humane of men—had during the South African War was the totally inadequate hospital accommodation.

The type of women who came to run the hospitals were frequently far from desirable, and the scandals of the hospitals were echoed from the towns right over the veld.

I have heard Haig say that many a Tommy and officer owed his life to being cared for by some good housewife at some lonely farm, instead of being at the mercy of the prevailing arrangements for transport and the unsatisfactory hospitals at the journey's end.

Of course, this does not apply to all. There were some excellently conducted hospitals, but the general condition of Red Cross arrangements in Africa left much to be desired.

This was a matter which caused anxiety

to all generals and commanders in Africa, but I think Haig suffered more than most because he was super-sensitive to the feelings of the troops under his command. Casualties and wounds inflicted on his men were personal sufferings to him. He never achieved that air of detachment which some commanders acquire.

Haig was essentially an open-air man. He loved hunting and shooting expeditions in the rough country. There was something in the grandeur of the African veld which irresistibly appealed to him.

And I am perfectly certain that, while he discharged his duty efficiently and well, he was delighted when peace came; and I am not altogether sure but that he did not take more part in bringing about that peace than most people know.

As a cavalryman and a student of strategy and tactics, he was, from a military point of view, in his element when he commanded an independent column, and he fought many battles against bands of the enemy in the rough country.

But I think he saw, more than any other commander, the utter hopelessness and pity

of it all. He longed for the days of friendship which were to come. I remember when *pourparlers* of peace were afoot, setting off to see a certain famous Boer general with a personal note from Haig.

What was in that note I must not tell. I passed through the Boer outposts under the White Flag and was escorted direct to the commander, to whom I delivered my note. I had instructions in certain circumstances to destroy it, but the circumstances never arose. When the commander had read the note he nodded to me in a friendly manner and ordered a meal to be given me.

Then he handed me another note to take back, and provided me with an escort through the territory under his control.

I delivered the note to Haig, who opened it eagerly and read it.

"Good! Good!" he exclaimed; then enquired how I had fared on my journey. I told him. Then I proceeded to tell him of what men I had seen and of their dispositions.

"I don't want to hear about that," he said. "You have done very well." Then he ordered me to get some food and take a rest.

Later, when I saw Haig and Botha together

after the Peace had been signed, and observed the respect, even friendliness, they showed towards each other, I wondered if after all I had not played some small humble part in preparing the way for peace.

Haig was in his element when he was forwarding the cause of friendship and understanding in the days which followed. I believe it was a red-letter day in the history of Anglo-Dutch understanding when Haig took six polo ponies—or, rather, I took them for him—to Stainsburg, where the first polo match was played between the English and the Boers.

The match was followed by many more, and I think Haig captained most of our teams. Certainly his team got much excellent practice playing against the expert horsemen of the veld, and it may have been due to this that he brought off the great match with his Seventh Hussars team in the following year, 1903, and won the Polo Cup in England.

I know he made personal friends of many quite humble citizens of the colony. There is many a farm on the veld where a letter was received from the great Field-Marshal, even

in the busiest days in France, and I have seen his face relax into a pleasant smile when he opened a letter with the African postmark upon it.

Things of a controversial nature always annoyed Haig. The flag controversy in the Union was a matter he would refuse to discuss. I once heard him say to a general who was denouncing certain parties :

"Well, well, these are matters better left to themselves. The War record is good enough for me. What was the name of that place on the Dee you say you have taken for the fishing ?"

Thus he completely changed the topic, for everybody knew, without error, when the late Earl wished to drop a subject.

Though Lord Haig was not the great figure in the African War that Kitchener, Roberts, and French were, yet I am not alone in thinking that when the history of the South African Peace comes to be finally assessed the late Field-Marshal, who retained the weapons of kindliness and sympathy and generosity, and knew when to use them, will be accounted one of the architects of the temple of peace—a temple not built with hands.

The Great War was the arena in which Lord Haig was called to play his part, and it is the Great War with which his name will always be associated. This is but natural, but it is rather a pity, for it obscures the pictures of Haig, the democratic colonist, Haig, the first British General to discover that the dwellers on the veld were "gentlemen and sportsmen."

CHAPTER III

INDIAN DAYS

BY virtue of Sir Douglas Haig's position in India I never had the misfortune to be stuck in any single place for weary years—the truly killing experience for white soldiers in India.

Battalions are sometimes placed on duty at lonely frontier stations, and there they remain for years. Others are located in the unhealthy Central Provinces, and perhaps get a short respite in the hills for a few weeks during the intense heat. Then they are lucky if they are not drawn into some Frontier skirmish or other.

Sir Douglas had no geographical command at all in India. As Inspector-General of Cavalry, he simply travelled about over the whole country at will and inspected the various troops of cavalry, native and white.

These journeys were sometimes undertaken

by rail in his own special saloon. This coach was luxuriously fitted. It contained a sitting-room, sleeping-quarters, and a kitchen, with accommodation for me, as well as a chef.

Sometimes the saloon would be detached at a wayside station for an hour or so while Sir Douglas carried out an inspection already arranged. Sometimes it would remain attached to the express train, which was specially stopped at a wayside station, when Haig would alight, make his inspection, and go on again.

But when important stations were visited, the saloon would be placed in a siding, there to remain until we went on again, perhaps in a day or two.

Thus I had an excellent opportunity of seeing nearly every part of the country.

Sir Douglas was always most keen in promoting regimental sports, and he frequently presented prizes at gymkhanas and other sports meetings. He was invariably loud in his praises of the native cavalry, whose horsemanship was superb. I have seen them flying along at top speed at gymkhanas, and with their lances draw six successive tent-pegs out of the ground.

Whenever occasion permitted, Haig personally took part in sports. At special sports fixtures and matches he would sometimes attend with his own favourite polo pony, a very handsome animal. In that case, the pony was loaded into a horse-box and accompanied us on that particular tour.

It was a pleasure to see the understanding which existed between master and pony. The little animal seemed instinctively to interpret Haig's very thoughts in the polo field, and Haig was seldom on the losing side.

I think of all sports Sir Douglas loved polo best. It gave opportunities for that accuracy of judgement and lightning decision which were always his qualities. This white pony, which so often carried its owner to victory in sport, became an object of native veneration. It is difficult to trace these superstitions to their root causes, but for some reason or other the white pony was deemed "sacred".

I have watched diseased and crippled natives try to get near the animal to touch it so as to be cured. I have seen a story-teller squat on his mat and display his arms which, he assured his hearers, had previously been

leprous but were now whole—through touching the "Haig Sahib's pony."

Pathetic was the sight of native mothers, who had made the great pilgrimage to the sacred river Ganges, so that the waters of the Holy River might cure their little ones of some ill, lining up outside our compound. They were hoping to get an opportunity of seeing the white pony so that it might succeed where even the most sacred river had failed.

At first Haig was most concerned about this pathetic exhibition of superstition. He tried to explain to the poor creatures through intelligent natives that the pony was just a very ordinary pony, with no claims to curative propensities at all. He even arranged with the Medical Corps to lend a couple of doctors, and he set up a sort of clinic near his house so that the poor wretches might have at least some treatment.

But they laughed the idea to scorn. Even the miserable mothers with diseased infants were filled with merriment about the poor ignorant English doctors who thought that cleanliness and sweet-smelling ointment had anything to do with festering sores!

I have had natives come to me and tell me that they have been cured by touching the white pony, and even offer grateful rewards. Whether it was self-deception on their part or a case of suggestion in healing, I really do not know. All I know is that the superstition caused me a lot of annoyance and trouble. Whatever precautions were taken to exclude them there was always a little crowd of stray natives somewhere about, to glimpse the white sacred pony!

In speaking of self-deception, I am reminded of an occasion when Sir Douglas himself fell a victim to one of the wandering fakirs who claimed he could do the Indian rope trick. Sir Douglas and I were returning on horseback along a forest road in Northern India. He was riding Knight of the Deccan, his favourite charger, and I had a large bay cob which was restive and causing me a bit of trouble.

We came to a clearing in the forest, and there, squatting on the ground, with a huge crowd of natives around him, was a fakir. Beside him lay some presents of rice and fruit he had received. On his shoulders perched an eagle and two pigeons. Beside him sat a

boy, and, as we arrived, he uncoiled a long rope and stood up.

"Secrett, he's going do the much-disputed rope trick, I believe," said Sir Douglas. "Come along, we must have a look at this."

We drew in near to the crowd, and the attention of the hearers was immediately diverted to the British general. The fakir seemed to be offended and at once began to pack up his "props". Sir Douglas asked him to continue, but he refused, mumbling something about the necessity of everybody seeing all the parts of the "miracle". Sir Douglas saw that it was useless to press him, so, with a friendly nod and a wave to the salaaming crowd, he turned his horse and cantered off. I followed.

Sir Douglas was still thinking about the rope trick when we got near the station at which we were staying, for, as the horses walked up a rather steep incline, he turned to me and said:

"I believe we just missed that show, Secrett. I wonder if it is that these chaps are reluctant to demonstrate the trick to Europeans?"

"I don't believe there's a man living myself,

sir," I replied, "who can make an ordinary rope stand up on its end and send a boy up it! The only soldiers I've ever heard tell the story are noted for a bit of romancing."

He laughed:

"Well, I'd like to have seen the attempt, anyhow," he said.

Late that evening, after dinner and just before the sun went down, the fakir arrived at the bungalow at which Sir Douglas was staying. It stood at a junction of roads and was occupied by a major in charge of a cavalry detachment. Two lieutenants were with him, and, after dinner, Haig, the major and the two lieutenants were sitting on the veranda. The fakir at once recognized Sir Douglas, who immediately told the major about seeing him in the forest clearing.

The fakir salaamed before the party and suggested that he should entertain them. They at once consented and the performance began. He produced the eagle from a match-box, the pigeons from parrots' eggs, and did a few other clever bits of conjuring. Then, from the end of a powder-flask of old-fashioned design, he produced the boy! Where the boy had been, goodness only knows. Certainly

the old fakir was a perfectly marvellous conjurer. I was not able to watch the whole performance, as I had to keep going backward and forward. The major's head man was ill, and I acted as butler.

I saw that the fakir insisted upon the party leaving the veranda to watch part of his performance. They sat on cushions in a circle round him. I watched from a window. I saw the old fellow make the round of his circle several times, then I saw him uncoil his rope. He moved once more round the circle and then, pointing upward with one hand, shot the rope into the air with the other.

Sir Douglas and the others sat with their eyes turned upwards. Then the boy was brought forward and the old fakir mumbled something. His audience now turned their eyes on the boy, who stood on the ground. The fakir slowly and gently moved his hand upwards and the audience followed his hand with their eyes. He seemed to be giving instructions to the boy and addressing the spot where his eyes rested—ever upward.

Then the whole thing dawned on me. He had mesmerized his audience—including my master!

I went out at once!

"The boy is still on the ground, sir!" I called, "and the rope fell the moment he threw it up!"

For a second the fakir's attention was taken off the audience and the imaginary rope; in that second all four seemed to come out of the spell, or whatever it was he had woven round them.

But here is the remarkable thing. Although I saw the whole incident with my eyes it was quite a long time before Haig would really believe that his eyes had deceived him. The major had heard of the identical experience before, and was exceedingly glad that I had interrupted in the middle of the trick, or else, he said, he would have been prepared to swear that he had seen the trick performed.

The old fakir was immensely angry with me—naturally! That night as I slept I thought I heard a footstep on the balcony outside. The least sound always woke me, and I was up in a shot, and had the shutters open. But no one was there. Nevertheless, never having been prone to fancying things which did not exist, I stayed awake for a

while. I knew there had been a footstep—certainly that was true—and I was just a little curious to know who was prowling about at that hour of night.

A moonbeam cut through the slats in the shutter and I lay watching the shadow on the floor made by the intercepted light. As I lay, suddenly I saw the colour or the shape of the moonbeam change at a place near my camp-bed.

I switched on my flashlamp. There, coming towards my bed, was a viper, his wicked little eyes glinting in the light.

As I moved he raised his head, but snakes were not new things to me. I took the pillow from under my head and held it between the snake and myself while I leapt out of bed and seized my revolver. The snake had turned and was definitely making for me. I did not want to fire the revolver if I could help it, because that would disturb the household ; and yet, not having a stick, I did not see what otherwise I was going to do.

My eye caught a couple of crossed kukri knives on the wall, and, still facing the snake, the revolver in my right hand, I

tried to reach one of the knives with the same hand in which I held the torch. But the movement was awkward, and just as I felt the knife, the viper darted its head forward.

I waited no longer. I fired and blew half its head off. Again, even as the report of the shot died, I heard a step on the veranda. I dashed out, this time with the flashlamp, and was just in time to see a dusky figure disappear round the corner of the bungalow. I fired, but too late.

Meanwhile, the alarm had been given ; the major and one of the lieutenants were at the door in their sleeping suits, and behind them was my master.

I explained what had happened. The major said it was the first viper he had seen in the district.

I was not surprised. I had seen such snakes in the South and in the Central Provinces, and I knew perfectly well this one had not come by accident. I did not state my suspicions, because I might have been laughed at, but Sir Douglas knew that when I said I had heard a step I *had* heard a step. For the rest of the night a trusted

native guard was set, and no more prowlers came around.

Sir Douglas was the more concerned because Knight of the Deccan, his favourite charger, was whinnying in the stables. When inspected he was found to be perfectly all right, but something obviously had happened. Horses are very sensitive creatures.

CHAPTER IV

INDIAN DAYS (CONT.)

AFTER Sir Douglas Haig's marriage to the Hon. Dorothy Vivien, who returned with him to India, his house at Simla became a great social centre.

Lady Haig accompanied him frequently on his journeys of inspection, and she soon became a most popular figure in Anglo-Indian society. Lady Haig is an enthusiastic sportswoman and a perfect hostess.

In the rough country of the Pass and beyond, so frequently in the past the scene of bloody struggles with the tribes, Lady Haig has shot antelope and mountain wild sheep which there abound.

Lady Haig was very popular with all ranks in India, and, though she could not lift the ban on the colour question, she did all she possibly could to be on friendly terms with the native women.

Sir Douglas was rather curious in his

approach to the colour question. Both before and after his marriage he observed at home the rigorous Indian conventions as to who should, or should not, be invited to his house. Outside of that, for him no colour question existed!

He chatted to Indians with equal suavity and genuine good-will, whether they were native water-carriers or reigning princes of provinces. There was, however, always a certain reserve about Sir Douglas. He never gushed, was always friendly, but very few people indeed could be described as his close friends.

He was a born commander, in the sense that he could make everybody about him feel quite comfortable and happy, and, at the same time, keep them very strictly in their places. He never permitted anyone, high or low, to presume an inch upon the liberty given them.

As an illustration of this, I remember upon an occasion accompanying him into the fastnesses of the Frontier mountains on a game hunt.

Our guide was a young subaltern of the Sappers attached to one of the Frontier forts,

who knew the country where antelope and occasional bison were to be found.

The party consisted of Haig, two colonels, a major, and this young lieutenant. Haig was perfectly affable and friendly with the lieutenant, as he was with everyone else. At night we sat round a campfire at the entrance to a cave, where we intended to spend the night. One of the colonels and Haig were chatting about General Hector Macdonald, whom they both had known and loved. Into their conversation the subaltern, doubtless thinking that all barriers of rank were down—though, knowing Haig, he should never have dreamt of making that mistake —interrupted :

"I know rather a good story about Fighting Mac," he said, and proceeded to tell his story. It had a joke in it of a very low order, and I knew as soon as I heard it that there would be trouble. Haig immediately stiffened. Not the shadow of a smile crossed his face, but instead, there appeared the severe frown which, upon occasion, he could show ; his naturally pleasant expression was clouded.

"I think this mountain air has got to your

head, Mr. ——" (he mentioned the man's name). "Can you find your way back in the dark ?"

The young officer stammered apologies, but Haig waved them aside.

"Can you find your way in the dark ?" he repeated.

"Certainly, sir," replied the young officer, rising.

"Then you have my permission to leave us," said Sir Douglas. After he had gone one of the colonels said :

"Some of these youngsters ought to go through a special course in ordinary good manners !"

"Have you ever got into the interior of Tibet ?" asked Haig, cutting straight across the subject, to which he never again referred.

That was typical of Haig ; he could be friendly without appearing to be condescending, but never tolerated for a second the slightest familiarity. People who thought that the charming smile and pleasant manner meant that Sir Douglas was Bohemian or "easy" to become familiar with, were very quickly frozen.

At the Delhi Durbar, in 1911, he did a tremendous amount of entertaining. He had

to meet all the Indian princes there gathered and personally entertain many of them.

All India was at Delhi! The scenes of rich ceremony and brilliant colour were unsurpassable outside a fairy-story.

Every building was hung with bunting. The brilliant hues of the full-dress uniforms of the soldiers, the flaming scarlet, the silver, and the burnished brass which shone like gold, the sparkling jewels of the princes and the women—all made a picture which will live for ever in the eyes of all those privileged to see it.

It was in this atmosphere of meticulously-regulated ceremonial that one of the princes made a *faux pas!*

For some little time there had been friction between this ruling prince and his British advisers. The prince considered that, as he had sovereign rights, he could do what he thought fit in certain matters dealing with taxation; the British officials thought otherwise. An appeal to the India Office resulted in the support of the officials, and the reigning prince was extremely offended and resentful.

He called upon several of his fellow princes to join him in a united protest to the

King-Emperor. Several of them actually made representations to London, but as soon as they received a negative reply they dropped the matter and advised their fellow-ruler to do the same.

But he would not. It was the first time that his authority had been flouted, he said; and, indeed, the first time that of his family, which had ruled the State for hundreds of years.

At Delhi, he sought to form a *bloc* of princes who would join him in an open protest to the King at the Durbar itself. They all refused. Then he decided to make a spectacular demonstration himself. He intended to choose his opportunity, when he was actually in front of the King and Queen acknowledging his fealty, to read a short address of protest and condemnation.

He intended to say things which would remain for ever as a painful memory in the ears of the King-Emperor and his Consort—and completely spoil the Delhi Durbar.

News of this was brought to Sir Douglas by an Indian prince with whom he was on very close terms of friendship. Haig set off at once to where the prince who was to

cause all the trouble was encamped. He rode on horseback and I accompanied him.

He was kept waiting a few minutes before being ushered into the presence of the prince —a deliberate snub, for I saw the prince sitting smiling at the open back of a large marquee.

At last Haig got in, and I could see by his manner that he was offended and had felt the insult of being kept outside. He kept his hat on, saluted perfunctorily, and straightway approached his business. The rajah was sitting in a huge teak chair like a throne, which had been transported with his other equipment from his State. I stood just outside the marquee, holding the two horses, Knight of the Deccan, Haig's charger, and my own. Two punkah-wallahs stood mechanically moving the punkahs over the head of the prince.

"Good day, Your Highness," said Sir Douglas. "I understand you intend to make a demonstration to-morrow at the Durbar. I hear you are going to read a speech of protest, or something. I wish to know whether or not I am correctly informed?"

"Will you tell me by what right a British

general comes to—" the rajah began, but Haig cut in :

"Will you answer my question, Your Highness ? Are you going to make this demonstration, or not ?"

"I shall do and say precisely what I like," said the prince, "and I shall take no instructions from you, General Haig !"

"Then take advice," said Haig curtly, "and take warning. I have made certain arrangements and have behind me certain very high authority. The moment you make your demonstration, I shall attach your person. Arrangements have already been made for your supersession at your capital. Now do what you think wise. Good day !"

"But what authority ? What arrangements ?" asked the rajah, who had risen in his excitement—but Haig was gone, and, by the time I saw the rajah's back going through the curtains of the marquee after Sir Douglas, he was by my side and I was holding his stirrup for him to mount.

"General Haig !" called the prince. Haig turned, saluted, and called :

"Good day, Your Highness !" then spurred his charger and cantered off.

The next day, at the Durbar, the prince made no demonstration, but contented himself by being definitely rude in his manner of bowing and withdrawing from the Royal presence.

I suspect that Haig bluffed him, because he saw the rajah within three-quarters of an hour of getting the information about the little scene which he had staged.

I may add that, in the years following, the troubles between the rajah and his advisers were smoothed over, and that when the Great War broke out he was just as loyal as his fellow-princes. He raised an army of his own and sent it to the common cause. He himself was given high rank, and filled one or two important Army positions with distinction.

Nevertheless, at that particular time only the unofficial intervention of Sir Douglas Haig saved a very unpleasant "incident".

But I must relate one amusing occurrence when Haig's "firmness" miscarried. The late Field-Marshal intensely disliked giving money rewards. He was not in the least mean ; he would work indefatigably for a person or a cause in which he was interested, as witness his work for the Legion. But he had that

little peculiarity about him—he hated parting with actual coin of the realm. Settling accounts and paying expenses by cheque never worried him at all, but the parting with actual cash out of his pocket was, in some strange way, most distasteful to him.

Now, India swarms with beggars of different orders and classes. Some of them are fakirs and receive alms for performing "miracles"; others are "holy men", who must receive alms because they have kept their right arm in one position for thirty or forty years, or have done some other fanatical thing. Others simply beg—for no other reason than that they want something!

At Haig's establishment something of open house was kept for all the poor who came—when they were deserving. But that really meant all, because I never yet saw an Indian beggar who could not convince a Greek Jew with Scotch blood in his veins that he was deserving! Food was given, sometimes clothes and medical necessities—but never money! That was a strict rule, and always adhered to!

Once I attended Sir Douglas whilst staying at the house of a colonel in the Punjab. The

A HAPPY SNAPSHOT OF LORD HAIG
with Lady Haig, and his Aide-de-Camp, on holiday during his Indian days

[*To face page* 60

colonel was a great agriculturalist and had sown all sorts of crops about his small estate. He took a great interest in flowers, also, and had managed to cultivate some roses, which were unique in India!

In the evening of one day which had been filled with duties they sat on the veranda with several other officers, quietly smoking, when an old fakir appeared.

He performed some of his tricks in front of Sir Douglas and the others, and was considerably applauded when he had finished:

"Bravo, old chap!" shouted the colonel and held out five rupees.

Haig was horrified. He put out his hand in protest.

"Don't do that, don't do that!" he said quickly. "Give him some food, or something. To give money only guarantees perpetual mendicancy."

The colonel deferred to his wish, but the old fakir cursed him openly! He was just going to be shoo'd off when he made a profound salaam:

"There is one other wonder, Sahib, which will cause you the very much highly amuse!" he declared. He took from his robe a long

reed pipe and began piping in a weird plaintive manner.

Now, there wasn't a crow in the sky when he began, but after he had been piping for about five minutes the crows began to come as though from nowhere. Crows settled on the lawn, on the house, on the trees—everywhere.

It was the trick, known to very few Indian fakirs, of "calling the crows".

"By Jove!" declared the colonel. "I wouldn't have believed that. That's wonderful; I hope they won't destroy anything. Call 'em off now!"

The old fakir double-salaamed and backed away, but he never called them off.

Night fell and the crows were still there. By the morning the crows, still there, had eaten everything above ground.

The fakir was searched for, but never found. It was thought that a general massacre of crows would be necessary, but at noon they arose as though obedient to a single command, and moved off.

"By Gad!" swore the exasperated colonel, "I think five rupees would have been cheaper than this!"

CHAPTER V

HAIG THE MAN

THE late Field-Marshal, to the great multitudes who were never privileged to meet him, will be remembered chiefly, if not entirely, as a leader of mighty hosts—a great, conquering general. But only those in close touch with him knew how intensely "human" the great soldier was.

In some respects he was a paradox. He was certainly a great soldier, but he never acquired many of the characteristics of the average general.

Without intending to be callous, I am certain even the most genial senior officers when they acquire high rank tend to be so immersed in the responsibilities and cares of their High Command, that they incline to look upon troops as an abstract quantity—so many guns, so many horses, so many rifles, so many men!

It is just that outlook which, in its full development, found expression in the German term "cannon-fodder", as applied to infantry.

Lord Haig never developed that abstraction. To him, even when the foundations of civilization were rocking under the military might of Germany, his men were still his men, carefully to be led, considerately to be treated.

I have known generals who took great casualties as a matter of course—regrettable, but still, the fortune of war. Lord Haig was not a bit like that. He suffered agonies personally, as I saw, when the casualty roll mounted up on the Somme. When in the battle area, he many times stopped to personally tend to wounded Tommies.

There was a time when we all thought that Verdun would fall under the Crown Prince's onslaught. If that had happened, the moral effect on the French would have been simply dreadful. I am certain, from all I heard at the time, that if Verdun had fallen we would have had either to take over the bulk of the French line or clear out of France altogether. The French Army at that time was very weary, and there was ugly trouble in several parts.

It was at this time that the French commander, Foch, came over and begged Haig to lend him two divisions. We had not the men to spare, but it was stated that the divisions were only required as reserves to stand behind the French before Verdun, and, by their presence, stimulate the drooping hearts of men who had certainly fought magnificently and were just about at the end of their tether.

The divisions went—on that understanding—tired men who had been fighting heavily themselves.

Circumstances necessitated the French High Command utilizing those troops, who were put into the line at Verdun. Probably greatly on account of their timely arrival, Verdun stood. But the effect upon Haig was pathetic. He grieved over the loss of those men as a father might over his own sons. He had never intended them to take the field.

In telling this little incident I want to make it perfectly plain that I do not intend to suggest that there was any breach of faith on the part of the French command. I am quite certain that General Foch would always do the right thing ; I only mention the incident

as showing how intensely Lord Haig felt and how he cared for his men.

There have been generals—Sir John Cowans was one—who were on much more familiar terms with the men in the ranks than was Lord Haig, but though the Field-Marshal kept everybody in his place, he had always a pleasant word for a man he recognized. While preserving his dignity, he managed to convey to the Tommy the fact that he respected him. It is difficult to describe the many little ways in which he did this. There were the respectful manner in which he invariably returned a salute, the pleasant smile for those he knew, the considerate and sincere enquiries of the wounded as to their condition, and a host of other little points.

Lord Haig was never too busy to be a gentleman!

His consideration and kindliness extended to animals. An old cavalryman, he was passionately fond of horses; and horses, most sensitive of animals, always loved him.

I have often thought the reason why he was such a brilliant polo player was that he had such a perfect understanding with his polo pony. The animal sensed what he

wanted almost without a touch on the rein.

In India he had a beautiful white polo pony. This pony would follow the late Field-Marshal about like a dog; Knight of the Deccan was the favourite charger of Lord Haig when he was Inspector-General of Indian Cavalry.

No matter how dusty or tired he was after a long ride through the heat, he always saw Knight of the Deccan taken in hand before he went to look after himself. Knight of the Deccan was a magnificent animal, and he knew his master as well as I did. I was told that, during the several journeys Lord Haig made to England, the animal fretted for him, and upon the return of the master, the joy of the "Knight" was wonderful to behold!

I am afraid that there is rather a tendency for some British officers to treat their native servants somewhat roughly. In India, everybody has hosts of servants, of course, and labour costs next to nothing.

Lord Haig set an example which any officer who claimed the title "gentleman" might well emulate. He not only was considerate to all members of his extensive

household in India, but he knew them all, always had a pleasant word for them, and saw to it that they were well housed and fed.

To Europeans, nearly all natives look alike, but my late master took such a personal interest in all those about him that to him there was no confusion of faces. I have seen him in France pick out a native cavalryman whom he had met in India years before.

Perhaps I cannot illustrate better the late Field-Marshal's love of horses then to publish the following two verses signed "Red Hussar" which were written by Lord Haig himself years ago! They were written after the African War, and in reality dedicated to the charger which had carried him through the long months on many a weary march and through many an ambush!

A TOAST TO MY SWEETHEART OF YESTERDAY
A HEALTH TO MY PAL TO-DAY

Here's health to the girl who I see in my dreams,
As I knew her long years ago.
A health to My Queen and the old-time scenes,
Of the steeplechase, hunt, and the foe;
My queen of the pigskin, my soul at the ball,
The one to whom homage I owe,
The girl who has stuck to my side through it all,
My mate in the sunshine and snow.

My comrade when honour and glory were mine,
My friend when the money was done,
Who stuck to the ship in the trough of the brine
When the mast and the rudder were gone ;
"A good one to follow, a bad one to beat",
When it came to a "do it or die".
So I toast to my sweetheart of yesterday,
A health to my "pal" of to-day.

RED HUSSAR.

Though the late Earl did not make many money presents, he always acknowledged service, and gave presents of a suitable nature to mark his appreciation. There is a good deal of sense in that. After all, money soon disappears, but useful presents remain. I treasure two watches presented to me by Lord Haig.

Lord Haig was always an assiduous worker, and even on holidays took with him authoritative military works to study. That, however, did not stop him thoroughly enjoying a little salmon- or trout-fishing when he got the chance.

He loved to whip a remote stream for trout, and would be perfectly happy with a lunch of a few simple sandwiches, and a drink of clear water from the stream.

Though I should say that polo was his

greatest sport, he certainly loved fishing, and, to a great extent, big-game shooting.

He was an enthusiastic sportsman, entering into the game, whatever it was, with all the zeal he put into his more onerous duties when the war-clouds gathered.

Great was his jubilation when the Seventh Hussars won the Polo Cup, but I think the most enjoyable polo match he ever played in his life was one fixed up between a team captained by himself and a Boer team after the close of hostilities in Africa in 1902. He was delighted to be on friendly terms with his late enemy, whom he had always respected and admired.

Of course, it must be remembered that the general conduct of the South African War on both sides was of such a nature that no lasting bitterness was established. The days of chivalry were not dead in the years 1899-1902.

The wretched state of the Red Cross in Africa was a source of intense worry to Sir Douglas. There were many women from all ranks of Society who came out to "run" the hospitals very much as Society hostesses to-day might introduce a "treasure hunt"

or a "pyjama party", or some other stunt.

In the late War this had been completely remedied. The hospitals in France were an example to the world, and Lord Haig, busy though he was, saw to it that the right kind of people were in control.

Being of the type he was, conservative in his friendships, Lord Haig had many thousands of friendly acquaintances, but very few close friends. These close friends were friends for ever, and I remember many reunions, at Bemersyde, of old comrades of the War years.

Sir Herbert Lawrence, Captain Straker, Sir Philip Sassoon, and Col. Fletcher—all of whom served on his personal staff—were guests of his at the Scottish castle.

Another thing that always struck me about Lord Haig was his conception of duty by example in France. Though, as Commander-in-Chief, he could often have gone on leave and left a deputy, he set himself on exactly the same plane as a Tommy in this. While there were hundreds of officers who managed to "wangle" a leave-party pretty frequently, Lord Haig sternly kept to his responsible

task, and, though only those near him knew what his home meant to him, he rigorously denied himself the great joy of frequent visits.

Just like the married Tommy who carried through the War some little thing given him by his wife, Lord Haig carried one or two little things given him by his wife, to whom he was so deeply attached.

I remember just as we set out from Aldershot in those terrible days of 1914, Lady Haig handed me a luncheon-basket :

"There you are Sergeant," she said, "that will do for you to pack the General's meals in. I am sure it will bring you luck. I know you will look after him." Then she said good-bye and shook hands with me.

I carried that basket all through the War, and always, on a move, packed enough for several people in it, in case of emergency. Once, as I tell elsewhere, the basket was nearly captured, and twice I retrieved it from shelled châteaux. But it remained safe, and I brought it back when we came home at last !

There were many cases during the War of Tommies having to leave behind them in

their homes a baby newly born. I have heard many heartrending tales of husbands having to rush off immediately, perhaps with just a glimpse of the "little stranger". Often these men envied the High Command! If only they had been generals how different it would have been!

Would it?

In the beginning of the terrible German onslaught of 1918, in March, Lord Haig was summoned to London to attend a special conference at the War Office and meet the War Cabinet. He hurried to Kingston Hill to see his wife and managed to get there just after his little boy—the present Earl—was born. He managed to see his wife for a moment, and Heaven only knew how he longed to stay, if only for a day, to see her out of danger. But he could not.

CHAPTER VI

WAR!

IT was while we were still on manœuvres with the French Army that the news came through of the assassination of the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand at Serajevo. From the very first, the French generals at Headquarters saw trouble. The atmosphere became tense; the field exercises assumed a grim reality.

I remember asking Sir Douglas one night:

"Do you think this trouble is going to lead to war, sir?"

"I really don't know," he answered quietly. "Let us hope not."

In the field, Sir Douglas and General Allenby watched very closely the movements of the French troops, observed their methods of fire-control and open-order advances. It was a significant thing, as the manœuvres drew to an end, how important a figure Haig

became to the French High Command. Always popular, he became infinitely more so. There were many confidential chats between him and several of the French Army commanders.

One night, just before we came away, the servant of the French commander said to me :

"It is *au revoir*, my friend, and not good-bye. Within a few weeks we will be with our masters, you and I, on the road to Berlin—beyond the Rhine !"

In a sense, the words were prophetic enough. The only thing wrong was that we were very much on the wrong side of the Rhine when that time came.

Haig always took rather an odd view about a great European war ever breaking out. He considered such an event possible, but thought it more probable that the politicians at the last minute would come to some sort of an arrangement, and perhaps be strong enough to stop the whole business. On the other hand, he was quite certain, should the war actually break out, that the politicians would manage to keep us out, at any rate.

His idea was that both sides would observe treaty obligations so that no excuse could

be made for British intervention. With our great commercial organization and our Navy, he thought, we would be well able practically to dictate the settlement to the other Powers concerned.

I have heard him discussing a possible war on many occasions, and he always took the view that if and when we became embroiled, the Navy would settle matters before the armies ever got an opportunity of coming to grips.

When at last mobilization was ordered, Sir Douglas divided his attention between maps of the East Coast and the Belgian frontier. At last the declaration of war came and there was terrific excitement at Aldershot, but Haig was very quiet, reserved, and sober about the whole business.

Never were such days, surely, in the whole history of the garrison town. War! War! War! Nobody could talk of anything else but war. The married quarters were positive beehives of gossip and tittle-tattle. Spies were alleged to have been caught every five minutes, and the honour of every officer or man with a foreign-sounding name was in the dust.

"Get everything ready for a protracted absence, Secrett," said Sir Douglas to me just before he handed out his "Orders of Movements" to his corps commanders. That night, the advance guard of the British Army entrained for Southampton. The units which made up the First Army were brigaded, and the general commanding the Aldershot Command, Sir Douglas Haig, left his command to take the field at the head of the First Army.

There were many good-byes that night. Old soldiers, just as excited as the rest, knew fairly well that this business was to be no cake-walk. The days of strain and waiting had told upon Sir Douglas; he looked very drawn and grave when he came out after bidding Lady Haig good-bye.

Without navigation lights, we crossed the Channel, and the day following, Sir Douglas Haig inspected part of his forces at Havre.

By now news was coming through of the terriffic fighting at points on the French and Belgian frontiers. Rumours of great German reverses were followed by rumours of great German victories. Even the newspapers were just as erratic. From what I could gather, Sir Douglas took a very

grave view of the position, and when at last he ordered troops to entrain, he, at the final moment, hurriedly altered their destination. That was ominous to me. Sir Douglas was not a man to change his mind quickly. What had happened was that the first given point had already left our Allies' hands.

The two Army Corps took their arranged positions, and on Sunday afternoon came the telegrams of fighting at Mons and beyond. Excitement now at Sir Douglas's headquarters was at fever heat. The British Army was actually fighting the Germans!

Then came telegrams bringing news of reverses, retirement, even débâcle! Haig got into his black limousine, which he took out with him, and I was ordered to sit beside the driver as we drove up towards the Divisional headquarters of one of the units engaged.

We reached a point somewhere in the proximity to Mons, when Sir Douglas ordered the car to stop. In the distance, we heard the rumble of artillery like distant thunder. The landscape seemed peaceful and remote from war. Only on the roads were there evidences of the hell going on somewhere ahead.

Refugees in an endless stream packed the

roads, the fields, everywhere. Perambulators packed with luggage, carts drawn by men—the horses had gone to the Army—and carts drawn by women and children piled with beds and all sorts of domestic goods. Occasionally desperate efforts were made by transport officers to clear a way for ambulances and supplies. But it was nearly impossible. If the Germans had deliberately planned the blocking of the roads they could not have done it better. Movement was out of the question. The car was turned, and Sir Douglas left it and walked across some fields towards the next rise in the ground. I accompanied him with his Chief-of-Staff.

Before we cleared the mile separating us from the little hill-top, the noise of artillery had become much louder. Occasionally, a stray shell fell within half-a-mile of us, while, comparatively close, sounded the rattle of rifle-fire.

Over the field in which we were, signallers galloped, and engineers ran field-telephone wires. We reached the hill-top, and Haig dropped on his stomach and crawled to the actual summit. I followed. I heard his exclamation to the general beside him, and

the next minute the appalling panorama was laid out before my eyes.

We looked across a valley, perhaps three or four miles wide. Half-a-mile from where we were was a stream, or canal, and our troops were holding the bank. To the right, a battery of our field-guns was in action, but it was in front to where our eyes turned.

Dense — inconceivably-dense — masses of grey-clad figures moved steadily down the field towards the stream. They could have moved much faster, but they were obstructed by other grey-clad figures which lay on the ground. Our fellows were literally mowing them down, but still on they came. Line after line I saw advance, gradually dwindle, and then merge with the line behind.

Far away in the distance, just near the other side of the valley, I could see troops of German cavalry and batteries of their field-guns moving into action, while, on one of three roads, I could see columns of their infantry marching in column of route without the least precaution against artillery. Apparently they knew perfectly well that our artillery was exceedingly limited, and, at that point, we had exhausted our

ammunition, and that supplies were blocked.

Haig just looked at the other general without a word, then moved back.

The following days were calculated to turn grey the hair of any British Army commander. The retreat became a rout, the French Army cleared off and left our right wing in the air, the German Uhlans were actually between our rearguard and the main body. They hacked pieces off our retreating battalions just when they thought they would—and we were helpless.

Sir Douglas did not say a great deal, but I know that he was bitterly grieved about the prime cause of our catastrophe, which was the withdrawal of the French Army operating on the flank, with scarcely any notice. It was not a case of being pushed back. The French general, probably taking into consideration the fact that his right neighbour was retiring, also retired; but he had no command over British troops, and it was, according to Haig, his manifest duty to acquaint his ally on the left with his movements.

The French command were very excitable in those early days of disappointment and

disillusionment. When the retreat was at its height I remember Brigadier-General Gough saying to Sir Douglas :

"It looks as though Joffre doesn't mean to make a stand until he reaches the ramparts of Paris !"

"Why Paris ?" asked Haig. "It looks more like Marseilles to me at this rate !"

CHAPTER VII

A HOLY SPY

LONG after the position was exceedingly dangerous at Landrecies Sir Douglas remained there, waiting to get the reports from each of his units without the consequential delay of relaying information to another address.

At last, when night had fallen, and all our outposts had been either withdrawn or captured, the Germans actually did enter the town, and Haig's last messengers actually left his headquarters with their final instructions to unit commanders when the German advance guard had penetrated the town.

It was eleven o'clock at night when Sir Douglas consented to leave, and the firing between our own troops and the Germans in the streets was plainly audible. He left in the staff car, and I rode the horse I

generally used and led his and another. I was accompanied by Colonel Ryan, the medical chief at headquarters, and Captain Baird, one of Sir Douglas's aides. We rode away without any fixed destination, simply rode on until we reached such a place that Sir Douglas indicated as he retired. There we would pick up information as to our next calling-place ; and so on.

All through the long night the rain came down in torrents. The road was frequently blocked with refugees and army equipment. Behind us the sound of battle was never far distant. Often we had to leave the road and traverse rough country through woods and fields.

It was a murderous ride. All through the long night, dripping wet, the horses stumbling with very tiredness, we went on, and yet we knew that other poor devils behind were having a million times' worse job. That night the Germans cut off thousands of our people. At one point a lieutenant and a handful of men fought a regiment of Germans at an abandoned farmhouse.

When ultimately they were surrounded and captured after firing their last bullets the

German officer commanding approached the lieutenant and loudly greeted him :

"Are you the officer in charge ?" he asked, and upon being assured that he was he turned to his men and said :

"See that you treat these men like soldiers. They are men worthy of your steel !" He himself entertained the officer and treated him with every respect. Later on, towards the end of the retreat, at a counter-attack, the German officer was taken with his battalion and our men were rescued. When our lieutenant had made his report and stated what a sportsman the German officer was, he and his men were given special consideration. I think he was the only German commander to arrive in England wearing his sword. It was given to him as a mark of appreciation.

Because of the many frightful outrages committed in those early days, many of the acts of German chivalry which actually took place were overlooked and never recorded, but they certainly occurred.

I know of one case, for instance, where a German Oberst (colonel commanding a brigade) took the trouble to send across, by a

Red Cross man, a letter from a young subaltern to let his wife know that he was safe. His wife had just borne him a son in England and his appeal to the German officer had not been unavailing.

On another occasion there was evidence of great consideration on the part of a German commander. A young British officer had rallied around him about fifty civilians in a village. They used the rifles of fallen soldiers and helped to defend the village until they were completely surrounded and overpowered.

It is a law of war, of course, that no civilian must use arms, on pain of death, and the German commander took the British officer and his men captive and had the civilians sentenced to death. The British officer appealed in person, and said that he had asked the Belgians to fight, and offered to be shot in their stead. The German colonel considered the position carefully, and then said :

"I cannot accept your sacrifice, Captain, but we will forget about the civilians. I will intern them instead."

This case was brought to Haig's notice,

because the officer was recaptured during a counter-attack. By special orders from Sir Douglas that German colonel was given great consideration and personally thanked for his humanity.

To the average commander, the laws of war must hold. Armed civilians were a fearful menace, and in strict law the German would have been perfectly correct in dealing with them by martial law. I am certain there must have been many such cases which of necessity were overclouded by the frightfulness, the horrors and the atrocities.

A rather amusing incident occurred in the days of the retreat. One of our battalions which had been fighting a rearguard action for several days suddenly found itself out of touch with the enemy's advance-guard. They marched on through a single night and in the morning found themselves facing an advancing squadron of Uhlans. The German cavalry had been instructed by the higher command to take over a certain part of the Front to make for greater speed, and had gone miles forward without encountering any enemy at all.

In the dawn they suddenly realized that

they were miles farther to the west than they ought to be, and turned, to meet our rear-guard.

A sharp action ensued and, while it was raging, one of our squadrons of cavalry came up from the left and the German commander surrendered, finding himself completely surrounded.

Sir Douglas interviewed the German officer commanding, who was both crestfallen and amazed to find that there was still a very strongly-organized enemy before him. He thought the British Army was wiped out long since.

"It is the fortune of war!" he declared. "But what matter is it? By Christmas the Kaiser will be in London!"

"I am afraid not!" said Sir Douglas. "I wish he were to be in London by Christmas. He will be, several Christmases later—if we want him—a prisoner!"

It was days before even our Headquarters realized what the great retreat meant. They knew that the French, on our right flank, had collapsed, leaving our wing exposed and making retreat essential. Even as it was, the German cavalry had got round and actually

captured some of our infantry units in the rear. But everything was vague, indefinite. All we knew was that for the time being retreat was necessary and a rearguard delaying action had to be fought.

In all these things the initial plans had gone completely astray. The function of the British Army had completely changed. Instead of being the highly efficient mobile column easily transportable from one section to another, we had become the "iron" troops, the reliable veterans upon which the hammer-blows of the great German Army could fall without absolute chaos resulting. True, the French were suffering on the extreme right; the Belgians had suffered at the frontier; but for some days the brunt was felt by the Army which was absolutely without experience of Continental manœuvres.

A famous council was held between Joffre and Haig, French and Kitchener and Smith-Dorrien.

Smith-Dorrien often has been blamed for the expensive action he fought in the retreat. Even Sir Douglas Haig considered the losses tremendous, but, as General Smith-Dorrien argued, if he had not made his stand, which

was a variation of the General Orders, he could not have continued his retreat. His men were absolutely tired out, and it was easier to them to stand and fight than it was to retreat farther.

All our generals, without exception, resented the unexpected French retirement on our flank. But for that there might have been a retreat after Mons, but there certainly would not have been the fearful débâcle which did take place. Lord French was so incensed about it that, had the decision been left to him, he would have ordered the British Army to retire from France altogether. It was because of his position that Kitchener came across post-haste and met all the generals concerned.

What transpired at that conference I do not know, of course, but I know that Sir Douglas Haig was satisfied that no repetition of the French Army commander's tactics was possible in the future.

But I might say this much. Although later on Sir Douglas Haig got on excellently with the French General Staff, and Generals Foch and Pétain were very good friends of his, he always felt very sore about the

unannounced retirement of the French commander on our right at Mons, which nearly threw the British Army into irreparable confusion.

At long last the retreat ended. Even the Germans found the strain of the lengthening lines of communication almost unbearable, and we on our side were getting nearer our base. Refugee traffic was being forcibly diverted to Boulogne and our supplies were coming up along fairly clear roads from Havre. A little rest was at last vouchsafed and Joffre made a stand on the Marne.

Then it was that the almost unbelievable happened. The Secret Service reported that Von Kluck was meditating a change of direction. The reports were confirmed, and the full force of the British and the French Armies, newly reinforced, was flung against his right flank. The operation was successful beyond the wildest dreams of optimism. Haig was jubilant. The mighty German Army, at one minute coming on with all the inevitability of Doom, was suddenly dealt a stunning blow, wilted, and fell back.

In the High Command the effect was electrical. Sir Douglas Haig was a new man

from the day he saw the Germans retire from the Marne. At last the British Army was filling its proper function and the theory of the efficient mobile army was justified. In those days between the Marne and the Aisne the British Army worked like a clock. Perfect touch was kept, the general staff were in touch with the units, the units were in constant touch with the enemy, harassing them beyond the possible chance of making a stand.

It is not saying too much to state, and Sir Douglas often asserted it, that had the rest of the forces on our left and right been anything like as speedy and mobile as we were, there would have been no check on the Aisne: we would have driven straight through to the Rhine in 1914.

As it was we were badly checked on the Aisne. There, the Germans holding the east bank of the river, really began the stalemate which, with variations, lasted until 1918.

One epic feat occurred on the Aisne which stirred Sir Douglas Haig. Count Gleichen, commanding a brigade, arrived on the bank of the river and found progress stopped.

The Germans had destroyed the bridges

and the river was subjected to such fire that he could not get his engineers to construct a pontoon bridge. Near him and on his frontage was a partially destroyed bridge of which the girders remained. Count Gleichen set his brigade to get over on the girders of the destroyed bridge. He so ordered his units on the flanks of the bridge that they gave the maximum amount of covering fire to the crossing troops and, although he had casualties, he actually got his brigade over and formed a bridgehead.

Unfortunately, as the French were not able to get across and the danger of isolation increased, the brigade had to be withdrawn, again with casualties. But the performance was such a brilliant one that Haig remarked :

"By Jove ! If they were all like Gleichen, we would be on the Berlin side of the frontier inside a month !"

Immediately after the Aisne action we marched straight north on Ypres to meet the German armies which were marching on the Channel ports. By now espionage was being seriously felt, and hardly a day passed but what a court martial had to deal with a German spy.

At one point of the road on a Sunday a halt was called for some of the troops at a village, and a Church Parade was held. The Roman Catholics worshipped at a barn in a hamlet where there was no church, and they had Mass said by a tall, distinguished-looking priest with a very beautiful voice.

After the Mass an old village woman came with a report that the priest was not the parish priest of the district, who had left some days previously and, moreover, that she suspected him because he was always asking questions about the troops passing through the district. He often had been seen to descend a cellar in the house where he stayed.

The cellar was searched and a Secret Service man found that it contained a telephone linked up with the Secret Service of the German armies.

The priest was arrested, court martialled, and sentenced to be shot. He petitioned to be buried in the German flag, and because of his peculiar case and the fact that some Irish Roman Catholic soldiers were kicking up a fuss about shooting a priest, Sir Douglas consented to see him.

He produced papers and identification

marks which showed that he was an ordained priest of the Roman obedience. He was a baron in rank and a colonel in the German Army. He said he had felt the call of his country as being almost prior to the call of the Church, and had dropped his priesthood to enter the Army.

He was absolutely fanatical in his patriotism and sincerely attached more importance to being buried in the German flag than many men would have attached to being pardoned. Sir Douglas assented.

"I consider myself fortunate," said the German, "to die at the hands of a gentleman and a soldier."

So the squad lined up, and the German priest-colonel was shot, wrapped in the flag of his country and buried within a few yards of the barn in which he had said his last Mass.

There was bitter grumbling amongst the Irish soldiers and amongst some of the villagers about this execution, for it was said that the priest, though a stranger, had been a very devout and good man, generous and considerate to the poor.

But though Sir Douglas saved many a

man from the firing-squad, yet he knew his duty, and no question of rank, no reasons of sentiment, or even religion, would deter him from doing the duty which, as a soldier, he knew he ought to do, though as a man he loathed the doing of it.

He only saw the German spy in this case for about five minutes, but that was enough to satisfy him that he was no mercenary, but a stern patriot and a fearless man. The soldiers who grumbled did not see him as I did, go into his room and shut himself up for nearly half an hour!

My late master had a great heart but an equally great sense of duty!

CHAPTER VIII

DISDAIN AND DANGER

IT was at Ypres where the War definitely took the new form. Up to the First Battle of Ypres there had been movements of troops and the occasional employment of cavalry. Now all this was changed.

The German attacks upon our positions at Ypres were warded off, but it became necessary for us to dig for what cover we wanted. Trenches were dug ever deeper and deeper to give protection against shrapnel and high-explosive. As we dug, so did they, and siege-warfare began.

The next thing was that the Germans began to bring up very heavy artillery to shift our trenches and earth-works. So far as we could we replied to that, but our main activities were in the direction of strengthening the defences. Sir Douglas Haig staked almost everything on Ypres. He never ceased to

work night and day to prevent the German passage to the ports. For that is what it would have meant. Had Ypres fallen the way to Calais lay wide open.

I do not think in the history of war—war on a big scale—there ever was a commander so utterly oblivious to personal danger as was the late Field-Marshal. In his defence of Ypres he lost all sense of personal danger. His headquarters were at one time within half a mile of the actual fighting!

Any soldier realizes what that means. A stray shell at a moment's notice might have carried off the First Army commander. For a while he occupied the White Château on the Menin Road, and one day the château itself came in for heavy bombardment.

In the first fateful days of the Battle of Ypres, Haig was frequently in the reserve trenches, ever keen to have first knowledge of what was going on, always to be in a position to do the correct thing.

In those days, when the line tottered, when reserves were well-nigh exhausted and ammunition giving out, Lord French came down from Headquarters one day to visit

Sir Douglas and look towards the advanced positions himself. He rode along the road until he was nearly blown to pieces himself by a bursting shell, and then he found Sir Douglas, who had been much nearer the Front, and remonstrated with him for taking such risks.

Sir Douglas listened to him patiently and promised to be careful, but the very moment he left him he rode up to the advanced positions to watch the battle from there.

Sir Douglas's utter fearlessness, amounting to absolute recklessness, was a source of never-ending worry with General Headquarters. Lord French frequently remonstrated with him and, shortly after the incident I have just related, Kitchener came across and personally, in my hearing, remonstrated with him.

"There are some of us, you know," he said, "who must take the maximum amount of care, in the general interest. The duty which enforces a man to keep back may be sterner than the duty which sends a man into the trenches!"

"I am never conscious of taking a stupid

risk," Haig replied, "but I sometimes find it absolutely necessary to form my opinion at first-hand after reading every report."

'I know," replied Kitchener, "and it is because I know how solid your conclusions are that I keep coming to see you. But for God's sake be careful—we can't spare you, Haig !"

Lest it should be thought that my late master was acting from a spirit of bravado, let me hasten to make clear that it was nothing of the sort. Bravado, or boastfulness, were as foreign to his nature as cowardice. It was simply that he was so obsessed by the task in hand that he lost all interest in self to immerse himself in the duty to hand. He really and perfectly truly was oblivious to danger !

I remember once that the Germans shelled the White Château, and as soon as the shells began to fall I got his car ready, and his chief-of-staff immediately began to collect the papers for an emergency flit !

General Munro went into the room in which Haig sat and told him that the Château was thoroughly unsafe. Would he come immediately ? The car was ready.

FOR A TIME HAIG'S HEADQUARTERS IN FRANCE

"Wait a while," said Haig. "You can see I'm busy!"

"Bang! Crrrrrraaaack!" A shell burst near. Splinters flew, glass from the windows covered the very maps he was perusing on the table.

"For Heaven's sake come, sir!" exclaimed General Munro. "The next shell may be the last—come!"

"I said I was busy!" Sir Douglas looked up quite annoyed.

I was waiting on the stairs, my heart in my mouth. I knew how stubborn he could be and I knew perfectly well that the Château would not cease to be a target until it was properly demolished.

Presently, with a sigh, he rose:

"This wretched place is no longer safe," he said. We all smiled. The humour was absolutely unconscious. There was not one of us but had expected to be blown sky-high at any moment during the last half-hour that he had dawdled over his maps. He had only at that moment realized that there was any danger.

But his experience did not have the effect of making him more careful. Just after that

he had a reporting station at what was known as Hell Fire Corner. Sir Douglas frequently visited this reporting station personally, and one afternoon he crossed about four o'clock and took reports.

He left the reporting station, and within one minute of his going a shell dropped right square into it, exploded, and killed everyone in the room Sir Douglas had just left.

He seemed to bear an almost charmed life in the field. There was another occasion when I despaired of getting him to move. This was much later, when he was Commander-in-Chief, and his headquarters were temporarily at St. Omer. The Germans had evidently some wind of General Headquarters being at St. Omer, because one night they sent over three flights of bombers to bomb the place very thoroughly.

Three bombs dropped quite close to the château in which he was. I made the flitting arrangements, and his staff were waiting on the stairs to accompany him. I hoped that he would waken himself, because he hated to be wakened unless it was absolutely necessary. However, his chief-of-staff gave me direct instructions.

"Go in and waken him, Secrett," he said. "We're going to be blown to beggary in a minute!" So I went in. Sir Douglas was in a perfectly calm sleep. He always would sleep like that, through any crisis. I hated to disturb him, but even while I hesitated there was a great zoom and a crack, and another bomb had burst somewhere so close that the glass in the room in which he slept came flying across to the left of me. I thought he must have heard that. But no, he slept on, so I got him by the arm and shook him gently.

"What is it? What do you want?" he asked.

"The Germans are bombing the château, sir!" I said. "The glass is even out of this window!"

"Well, well!" he said sleepily. "Can't you block the window up with something? Why do you want to disturb me like this?"

Again a bomb dropped and again the whole place rattled, the china in the room, the doors, the windows and everything seemed to be vibrating after the concussion.

"There's another, sir!" I said.

"Yes, I heard it!" he said, but he never moved. Then:

"Well, I suppose you have everybody standing to," he said. "I had perhaps better move, but really, I don't think there's much to worry about. It isn't the first time they've bombed us, and it won't be the last, I expect."

So he proceeded to dress quite quietly and unperturbed. He washed, and brushed his hair, carefully fastened his tie, and saw me adjust his spurs properly to the accompaniment of the music of death-dealing bombs.

When he ultimately appeared on the stairs two of the senior staff officers were mopping their brows. They were positively terrified lest he should be struck down before he could move.

In the courtyard before the château his car was waiting. Near by, a little group of soldiers were standing round two badly injured Tommies. Sir Douglas enquired after them.

Then he entered his car and I hopped up in front with the chauffeur. Opposite, in a smaller house, Prince Adolphus of Teck, Her Majesty's brother, who was military secretary to Haig, had his headquarters, and he had been bombed out!

A bomb had dropped right on the place, and the last thing I saw as we ran out of St. Omer was the prince running about in his pyjamas, shouting for his car which had not turned up to take him away.

However, I am glad to say that it turned up later, and the prince himself was none the worse for his experience.

Yet, though Sir Douglas was so absolutely fearless, he had a great sympathy with soldiers who, for a moment, perhaps, lost their heads. With drunkenness he had no sympathy at all. If an officer on duty was shown to have drunk too heavily with a view to soothing his nerves, Sir Douglas had nothing but fierce condemnation. But if in the hour of crisis some poor fellow allowed his nerves to triumph over his sense of duty for an unguarded moment, then my master had nothing but deep pity for such a man.

In his capacity as the extreme arbiter of life and death in court martial cases, he saved hundreds of lives.

Anything approaching disloyalty, treachery, vice, he could be very severe on, but weaknesses, like a lad going to sleep for a second on sentry duty, or a sudden loss of

nerves before an advance, he could be deeply human about.

"Poor boy!" I have heard him say in connection with a lad court martialled for sleeping at his post. "The life is still very strange to him and he was obviously very tired!"

And instead of bearing the fatal seal the paper went back endorsed:

"Sentence revoked—suggest short term imprisonment."

CHAPTER IX

A DAY OF TERROR

IT is my intention here to write a few things that otherwise never could be written. Books plentiful enough to fill libraries will be written and, indeed, have been written, about the War. But while these books are doubtless very great and excellent works, few of the historians ever had an opportunity of seeing, at close quarters, the men about whom they wrote.

They tell of what this or that commander ordered, they describe the fighting, but the men they write about might be pieces of intricate and delicate machinery, very efficient—but scarcely human. The generals of the historians are not much different from military Robots.

They say that, at a certain phase of the battle of Ypres, for instance, it was necessary to retire under tremendous pressure. They

say that the commander of the First Army, after satisfying himself of the need, though extremely short of troops, brought certain forces away from another part of his straining line and rushed them up to Ypres.

All true. But the reader is left with the impression that all the commander of the First Army did was to sit somewhere at the rear, listen-in to telephones, and give an order here, another order there, and the trick was done.

Just to illustrate how differently these things occur in reality, I will describe what actually happened in those moments of horrid crisis when the whole flower of the German Army was flung against the wonderful old Flanders town and the brave lads from England and Scotland who were holding on like limpets.

Upon the third day of the battle, the Germans had made disquieting progress. Their artillery in those far-off days was far superior to ours, and all the wires that our engineers had laid down were blown to pieces in the first few hours.

The day was dark and lowering, a fine drizzle occasionally fell, mists hung in the

air, and over a whole line covering the horizon hung the pall of smoke from discharging cannon and bursting shell.

On the road, a mile from the actual fighting, was Haig's headquarters. On his instructions I got his charger out and brought it round to the door of the château. A mongrel howled in the garden. An old Belgian woman passed the entry, pushing her way through hurrying files of Army Service men carrying rifle ammunition at the double up to the maelstrom of crashing, cracking, groaning earth and men—up the line!

Haig mounted and rode for the town—and the battle. Away to the right, in a little wood, the shells were bursting. Jerry evidently thought we had some reserves there. Had that been so, there would not have been one man alive.

"Look out, sir!" I yelled as the droning whine told of a tiring shell. Sir Douglas wheeled his horse, glancing a second to see if he could judge where the shell was going to drop. It dropped uncomfortably near. With a muttered curse I grabbed the general's shoulder expecting the thing to burst any second and ready to do what I could to

protect him. It failed to explode. My master turned to me with a smile.

"A dud, Secrett," he said. "Mr. Krupp would be very vexed if he knew about that!"

We rode on. Now we had reached a slight eminence, and the mists were less dense. Away in front a concentrated artillery fire was marked by regular white puffs as shrapnel burst. Through the puffs occasionally one could see two lines of densely-packed men in dark grey—German waves of attack.

"I think I'll just go up there, Secrett," said the commander as he dismounted and climbed a broken fence to reach higher ground.

A battery of field artillery came galloping up to take its position on the reverse side of the little hill.

"What the hell are you doing with those two horses on the road? Get out of it!" yelled an officer to me.

"General Haig's horse, sir," I replied, amused even in the midst of all the mess to watch the result of the remark.

"Oh, hell! Sorry!" and he rode on.

Shortly after, Sir Douglas returned, and

to my horror rode straight up the road towards the battle.

Right up to where a colonel had established his temporary headquarters did he ride. The colonel's men were just a quarter of a mile ahead, contesting every inch of ground against the numberless hordes.

Had he seen a German commander, the old colonel could not have been more surprised than when Sir Douglas pulled up at his shack by the wayside.

"Well?" Haig asked. "What do you think?"

"I have about four hundred effectives!" replied the colonel.

"You stand at the actual pivot," said Sir Douglas.

"We shall not leave the pivot, sir!" The grizzled old warrior smiled quietly. "Hello! look out!"

Three shells burst in quick succession fifty yards down the road.

"That means they've shifted up their field-guns," said the colonel. "For God's sake be careful, sir. You'll have the devil's own job to get back; they've got this road to an inch."

"Oh, never mind about that!" said Sir Douglas Haig, almost irritably—he was impatient of solicitude for his personal safety always—"Can you hold out until three o'clock?"

"Bless your life, yes, sir! Don't you worry about us!" I would like to have got down and shaken hands with the fine old man. It was just that bit of confidence that Sir Douglas Haig wanted that morning. He smiled and shook hands before he rode away.

All that day Sir Douglas rode about, encouraging battalion commanders, hurrying up artillery, rushing up the ambulances, hurrying, hurrying, hurrying the tardy reinforcements. And, at the close of the day, the crisis was almost past.

What he had called the pivot had held. The grand old warrior had kept his word. The line had so thinned that it had been necessary for the old boy to take a hand himself, but the reinforcements found the Germans checked, and that night we passed to counter-attack.

Sir Douglas went to shake hands with the old colonel, and I shall never forget how he

winced when they took him to a little shell-torn cottage by the roadside and drew a cloth from the grizzled features which even in death had a sort of mocking grin.

Sir Douglas went out into the tiny cottage garden, and presently he came back and put something green over the old colonel's brow. I looked after he had left the room.

It was a rough garland—of laurels!

"We held the enemy at Ypres and passed to the counter-attack on the right, and so-and-so," says the historian!

CHAPTER X

THE HAND OF HAIG

HAIG had a positive genius for inspiring loyalty and affection on the part of the troops he commanded. In time of peace he was first in promoting games and looking after all the recreative interests of the soldiers under his command; in time of war, no commander, either before him or since, ever evinced more care for his men.

However great the crisis, Haig would stop his car as he drove along the roads in France and Flanders to enquire after some wounded man, or even to offer assistance. I have seen him, times without number, minister to men with his own hands.

There was an occasion when the troops at the junction of the British and French Armies were being sorely pressed. Sir Douglas and Marshal Foch drove along the road leading

to the forward positions in Haig's car, on a tour of inspection.

Quite near the forward positions Haig spotted a Tommy making his way with difficulty to the rear, obviously badly wounded.

He stopped his car and enquired of the man what was wrong. He found that the poor fellow had volunteered to walk because he knew that all the stretcher-bearers were more than fully occupied with more serious cases. Yet he himself had serious injuries to his right leg and right side. He had over-estimated his strength and was likely to collapse. Haig immediately assisted him into his own staff car, and, with the assistance of Marshal Foch, bound up his wounds and made him as comfortable as possible.

In civil life the man was a chimney-sweep, his name was Tom Smith, and he came from Birmingham ; but to Haig he was simply a wounded comrade in need of succour. So, although minutes were precious, Tom Smith, chimney sweep of Birmingham, was attended to by Marshals Haig and Foch, and drove with them in the most important car in France to the nearest hospital, there to be

tenderly handed over for the better medical attention afforded.

Haig had also a very great understanding of a soldier's heart. He knew perfectly well the difficulties and burdens borne by his men and had boundless sympathy with them in all their troubles.

He knew, for instance, that soldiers of the old army sometimes found the atmosphere of the new armies and the Territorial regiments somewhat difficult.

I recall one particular case. Sir Douglas was driving one day to inspect some troops newly arrived in France, and when he came near to the place of inspection he saw a little group of struggling soldiers in the roadway.

There were a corporal and about half a dozen soldiers taking a man to the guard tent. The man was kicking and giving great trouble. Haig stopped his car and made enquiries. He was told that the man had been put under arrest for grave insubordination and insulting an officer.

While the corporal was making his statement the man kept hurling abuse at him and appealing to Haig to hear his side of the story.

"Well," said Sir Douglas, "what have you got to say?"

"My name," said the man, "is John Herbert Gordon, and I have been eighteen years in the service. I have soldiered with Kitchener in Egypt and was his servant before he left the Egyptian Command. I never had any trouble in the old days, but now I never have anything else but trouble. These new officers are nothing but tin soldiers, sir. My lot are nothing but bun-wallahs and balloon-juice drinkers. All I want is to get among some proper soldiers and under some regular officers, that's all."

"You say you were Kitchener's servant?" asked Haig.

"True as you're here, sir," replied the man, "and all I wish is that he could know what I'm going through now."

Haig took particulars of the man's name and number, his battalion and his commanding officer; then he permitted the escort to carry out their duty, and went on to his inspection. On his return to Headquarters he wrote to the man's commanding officer and asked for a report, both about the

incident he had witnessed and as to the man's general character.

He personally wrote a letter to Kitchener asking for verification of the man's statement that he had been his servant in Egypt.

The two reports came back. From the Territorial colonel came the report that Gordon was absolutely incorrigible. He had asked to be made the adjutant's servant when he enlisted or, alternatively, to be given non-commissioned rank. Both the applications were refused. The adjutant had a servant and the battalion had its full complement of N.C.O.s. Since then he had done nothing but cause trouble. He had defied N.C.O.s, insulted junior officers, fought and got drunk, spent months in detention, and rarely been free from confinement to barracks. His record was positively hopeless!

From Kitchener came the report:

"Gordon certainly was my servant, and an excellent fellow he was. I had lost sight of him. How is he?"

On the strength of this Haig intervened. He visited the battalion to which the man was attached and found that he had been court martialled again for his latest outbreak.

He was, at that moment, awaiting escort to the military prison at the Base, there to undergo three months' detention.

With a stroke of the pen Haig cancelled the sentence. He interviewed the man, and asked him exactly what he wanted and what were the causes of his lapses, whereas before he had been such a good soldier.

The man repeated his grievances against the new armies with their amateur officers and amateur soldiers. Haig told him that he would arrange his immediate transfer to a line regiment, and that he trusted to his sense of honour not to let him down.

The man had a stammer, and that, as well as the emotion choking his voice, made utterance difficult. With tears in his eyes he thanked the Commander-in-Chief.

"Sir," he said, standing rigidly at attention, "John Gordon never let his officers down. When I go over the top, I'll capture one of those b— machine-guns—beg pardon, sir; I'll capture a machine-gun, that's what I mean, sir!"

"That's the spirit!" said Haig with a smile, and forthwith he made the necessary arrangements for the transfer of the old soldier

to a battalion of the West Yorkshire Regiment.

In making the transfer, the Commander-in-Chief asked the colonel of the battalion to furnish a report as to his conduct. The report came back regularly and always more than favourable. Gordon was playing the game.

Some time afterwards, the battalion went over the top, and, in strenuous fighting, distinguished itself very greatly. Amongst the recommendations was included an account of an epic feat by a private, one John Herbert Gordon, who, single-handed, had captured a machine-gun and five prisoners of the enemy.

When Haig had first met him, Gordon had added to his name the letters D.C.M., meaning that he was to be tried at District Court Martial. After the action on the Somme with his new battalion, the Commander-in-Chief himself added the letters D.C.M. to his name, but this time they meant "Distinguished Conduct Medal"!

Another occasion upon which the Commander-in-Chief interfered with affairs concerning a humble soldier, was near the quay at Havre. There, a soldier going on

leave was having an altercation with the military police, and the Field-Marshal crossed to see what was the matter.

It was explained to him that the soldier was in possession of a German sword which he was trying to smuggle through.

Sir Douglas examined the sword and saw by its inscription that it had belonged to a German general. He asked the Tommy how he had acquired it, and the man told him how he had taken the sword from a German soldier at the point of the bayonet. In an attack on the Somme, our line was so far pushed forward that we reached one of the enemy headquarters of brigade. It was the brigadier who had been killed, and evidently some German soldier had been trying to rescue the sword.

"The only reason I brought it back instead of handing it in, sir," finished the man, "was that I wanted you to have the sword yourself and I wanted to have the honour of sending it to you."

"All right," said Sir Douglas, as he took the sword and signalled to the military police to let the men go.

There was enforced a very strict rule against

officers and men bringing back firearms, or arms of any sort. Thousands of German bayonets and revolvers were smuggled through, and no doubt many of these found their way to Ireland in the days when there was a premium on firearms in Ireland. They have since drifted into the hands of the criminal classes.

But for my late master's intervention, this man would have had his leave stopped and would have appeared before a standing court martial which particularly dealt with such matters.

In connection with this regulation governing the smuggling of arms out of the country, not only was there a strict search at the boats, but there was also a strict inspection and censorship of parcels which the boys kept sending home.

Appointed to this censorship at one point was an old brigadier-general, who was always inordinately curious. He would want to know each detail of every conceivable thing. The old gentleman had been on home service and was certainly fitted for no post in France, but he had begged for some job on the staff. I think he really entertained fond hopes that

once he got out he would convince the Powers-That-Be that he was perfectly fit to command a unit.

If such were his hopes they were speedily dashed, for, after he had held up the work of two departments one day for several hours by asking silly questions of no earthly importance at all, one of the chiefs advised his departure for home.

This was averted at the last moment by putting him in charge of one of the departments of censorship. He had no special work to do there. He had ample staff, and all he had to do really was to give a general eye to the work and sign certificates.

But the inquisitive old gentleman, whom his staff called disrespectfully, "Nosey Parker", held up matters, even there, by his still unsatisfied curiosity. He would open parcels and spread out the contents on his table, and occasionally, I believe, there were some very embarrassing contents; but still he kept on his intensive inspections. In the room with him sat another old officer of much lower rank, but, I believe, of almost equal curiosity.

One day a parcel was shown to them containing a German hand grenade. The soldier

handling it said it was loaded and advised handing it over to the nearest ordnance stores—there was one quite close at hand.

But this course did not appeal to the old brigadier and his assistant a bit. They wanted to examine the bomb at first hand. They did so, and, despite an agonized shriek of warning from the orderly at the door, the old gentleman pulled the pin out (after which the acid drops and the bomb explodes in a matter of seconds) and before the bomb could be wrenched from him it exploded. The orderly was partiallly blinded and disfigured for life and both the old gentlemen killed.

After that very strict rules were issued as to the handling of parcels.

But there were appointments practically forced on the Commander-in-Chief through influences at home. One of the worst of these was a certain politican who tried very hard to be made a general. He held the command of a battalion for a while, but managed to slip on leave whenever he wanted and caused a great deal of worry at headquarters by stirring up all sorts of inquiries which took up valuable time and occupied many officers.

While Haig intensely resented influence

brought to bear from authoritative people at home to support the career of any officer, he was always studiously polite to any such officer he encountered.

But, in a very quiet, unaggressive way he generally found a means of testing the officer's capabilities and upon that test the officer stood or fell. If he failed, then all the influence in the world would have made no difference.

There was a case in 1916 of a young boy who had just left a public school and who was given a commission in a famous regiment. The Somme shook his nerve, and one morning he was found in his dug-out raving mad—from rum! He was court martialled, sentenced to be degraded from rank, and, on the grounds of his youth, given the comparatively light term of five years' imprisonment.

That may sound harsh to civilian ears, but it is a fact that the death penalty has many a time been passed on an officer drunk in the face of the enemy—in this case in the very face of an advance!

Haig confirmed the trial and sentence, and very soon afterwards obtained a communication from home recommending the cancellation of the imprisonment and suggesting that

the youngster be permitted to join the French Foreign Legion.

Haig refused point-blank. At the time, I remember, he was exceedingly annoyed at the interference.

"When poor So-and-so was shot," he said, referring to an officer of humble origin who was shot in the days of Lord French's command, "there was not a voice raised to protect him. This chap is born with a silver spoon in his mouth, rushed through the O.T.C. much too quickly, appointed and seconded like a flash to a crack regiment, and then because he proves that he is not worth all this, they want to snatch him back from his due, and less than his due, punishment."

He said much more than that. Not that he was in the least hard, but he knew that this young man was highly connected and he resented the political interference.

As a matter of fact, I found out later that the young man was sent across to England to carry out his term of imprisonment, and released—on medical grounds—the week he arrived home. So the influence worked, after all.

CHAPTER XI

EXCEPTION TO THE RULE

THE coolness of Lord Haig was a proverb at Headquarters. Nothing, either serious or light, in the form of a crisis, ever flurried him. His mind was frequently strained to the last point of endurance, but, whatever he felt, he never registered any perturbation outwardly.

It seemed natural to him to remain perfectly cool, when it was equally natural for others to start, or to show sudden and momentary fear.

One day he went down into a very deep dug-out near Arras. At a table he sat with several staff officers and a brigadier examining maps of the sector. It was just a week or ten days before an attack was launched in this part of the line. The dug-out had a roof of flints, the idea being to explode at once, on contact, any shell which dropped there

before it could penetrate the earth to any depth and ruin the dug-out.

On the top, under the directions of a subaltern, several men were strengthening the supports of the upper part of the roof. Beams were being laid and cross-pieces of wood with corrugated iron to run the water off to a centre drain.

Evidently the officer on the top miscalculated the covering depth of earth, for suddenly the Field-Marshal below and the officers with him were pelted with a shower of falling earth, and a Tommy shot from above through a funnel-shaped hole and squatted on the table.

Instantly several of the officers jumped up with startled expressions, but Haig took the situation in at a glance, and, within a second, saw that it was not a case of total collapse or a shell-burst.

"Do you mind moving your foot ?" he said to the Tommy. "You're just covering the place I was looking at !"

On another occasion, on the Somme, he displayed his extraordinary coolness. On both sides of this sector our line had gone well forward, but just here the Germans had

managed to retain several important points of high ground, going back for some considerable distance in triangular formation.

Attacked on the flanks, they had held firm, and were causing great trouble by enfilading the support and reserve lines on either side of them. Heavy artillery was brought to bear, and a regular drum-fire beat every inch of ground, yet still they held, and when our attacking lines from three sides pushed their way into their first trenches, they were met by devastating machine-gun fire from machine-guns brought up from exceptionally deep dug-outs.

Sir Douglas stood chatting to a divisional general on an eminence from which he could see the whole panorama spread out before him. Away on the right, our troops were even then pushing the Germans back somewhere over the horizon, four or five miles away. On the left, our line was also out of sight, and the intervening ground was littered with the wrack of battle newly fought: trenches and shell-craters, broken posts and dead men, ruined limbers and abandoned field-kitchens, and all the thousand-and-one sights familiar to the eye near the firing-line in France. In the sky

overhead a German airman appeared scouting. He evidently spotted the little group surrounding Sir Douglas, and charged down.

"Take cover!" shouted the divisional general. Immediately two of the staff officers jumped down into an abandoned trench and indicated a half-smashed shelter to Sir Douglas.

"I think probably a night-attack by well-trained troops at points—converging on point — would be the solution." Sir Douglas was speaking to the divisional general and had not even noticed the aeroplane.

"Yes, sir," replied the general, "but do you see this fellow above, sir? We'd better take cover!"

Haig looked up. Just then the German swooped down and fired a burst from a machine-gun as he came. I could hear the rattle of the gun, commingled with the whirring of the 'plane. Little spits of earth leapt up, indicating where the bullets were striking—and they were not twenty yards from the group.

The airman passed, banked, turned, and came on again. There was nothing that could be trained on him. The officers in the group

were armed with revolvers. Our anti-aircraft people had no post just there. In the distance, a battery of artillery was making its way over the broken ground.

"Get on to a telephone and have this fellow dealt with!" ordered Sir Douglas. "Apart from uncontested scouting, he's going to hit one of us presently!"

An officer dashed off to a reporting station, but just at that moment one of our machines appeared, and the German, who had fired another belt and missed again, had to fight. Sir Douglas never moved a step from where he stood. He watched the combat in the air with deep interest. Very rarely was an air-battle fought so low. Our man had come right down to challenge the German. They swerved, banked, manœuvred in all manner of ways, but they could not dive—a dive would have been fatal to either of them, so the combat became a highly-technical game of skill in navigation.

At last the nose of the German dipped a little, and our man seemed almost to touch him as he passed over, so close was he. The German machine seemed to swerve unsteadily, drop a little, partly revolve, then drop again

—by now it was perilously near the ground—then it seemed almost completely to recover when the tail touched the ground. Immediately there was a burst of flames and the machine was on fire. All this happened within a hundred yards of where Sir Douglas was standing.

Instantly, two officers raced each other to the burning machine. The German pilot was trying to extricate himself. One of the officers dashed through the flames and bodily seized the German.

Our man's clothes were scorched, but his face was not even singed. As he ran, he had had the presence of mind to put on his gas-mask, which was just sufficient to protect his face. Immediately after the rescue there was a loud explosion and the flames literally enshrouded the whole machine. After that no rescue would have been possible.

Our airman landed to see the fate of his enemy, and was taken to Sir Douglas, who congratulated him on his victory. He also asked how it was that the German had managed to get through alone and was flying low so far back unchallenged.

The airman replied that the Germans had sent a huge number of machines over that morning further north, and all our people not detailed for special scout work had been sent to engage them.

Sir Douglas then completed his arrangements with the divisional general for the attack, which was launched the next night. It was not altogether a success, but it so jeopardized part of the German line that they withdrew in a series of rearguard actions the following day, when they saw exactly how they were menaced.

Sir Douglas personally very rarely received an officer or man who had done any brilliant feat. Had he done so, he would have been receiving them all day long and every day, for rarely a day passed without news of an epic feat accomplished by some man or other.

But there was one great exception to that. There was a pilot of the Air Force whose main duty it was to drop British Intelligence officers behind the German line. This man was an adept at this sort of thing. He knew exactly the best places to land in the enemy country, and could be relied upon to pick

his man up again at the appointed time at any given place.

Now there was an occasion when Major Howard, who had made many journeys into occupied territory, failed to keep his appointment for the return journey. In such a case it was usual for the airman to make an attempt the next night at the same time. This was done, but still Major Howard did not come. Three days afterwards word came through from another source that the gallant major had at last fallen by the wayside. He had been betrayed, tried by German court martial, and shot!

It was most vital to set a man down at that particular place to get certain reports, so it was decided to send a Frenchman attached to our Intelligence Department. One evening, in the growing dusk, they set off.

The Frenchman carried a German passport signed by the German Military Governor of Belgium. He spoke German and Flemish as well as French. He had papers of identity showing that he was a citizen of a Belgian town, and all sorts of documentary evidence to assist him, should he be betrayed.

That was the chief danger run by these men of the Intelligence Department—betrayal. They could bamboozle the German authorities every time, it was the renegades in the Belgian civilian population who continually gave the show away. There were cases of girls who were members of the Allied chain of communications who later lived with German officers and changed their loyalty. There were the never-ceasing cases of mercenary betrayal, and for such small amounts as to make Judas's transaction appear by comparison a good financial deal.

The Frenchman and the pilot arrived at the place arranged, and the pilot made a good landing. The Frenchman alighted. Then, for some evil reason or other, the wretched machine would not start again. The pilot tried all he knew. He examined the engine—everything. But it was no use, the engine would not start.

"Well," said the Frenchman, "it will do us no good to remain here together. The best thing is to separate and each fight his own battles." Our pilot cheerfully agreed, though his chances were poor. He was wearing his

ordinary British flying kit, and hadn't a word of German in his vocabulary.

First of all, he set a light to his machine, and then, divesting himself of his coat and tunic, which he threw into his machine, he made his way into Brussels in his breeches and shirt.

He was not *au fait* with the run of patriots in Belgium, and, to begin, he trudged the streets without any particular objective. He spoke a little French, and he stated his case to a girl in a shop. She was terrified when she heard of his predicament, and pointed out a back room where two Germans were billeted. However, she was a patriot and a sport. She took him—after lending him a jacket—to the home of some friends a short distance away, and there he remained hidden for a few days.

But he was anxious to get away, and after a while it was arranged to send him to a certain person who was known to the people with whom he was staying as a great patriot, and who was suspected by the Germans.

Our pilot made his way through the streets and boarded a tramcar. On the tram were two German military police acting as

gendarmes, and they weighed the pilot up in two minutes and found him wanting! They came over to him and asked for his papers!

He hit out hard and made a rush for the door. The Belgian conductor—a grey-bearded old man—conveniently turned deaf to the shouts of German police. A big matronly woman rose and shrieked, then placed her twenty-odd stone into the arms of the German who was not knocked out, impeding his progress effectively until the pilot had got the ground and hared off.

The hue and cry was pasted up, rewards were placed on his head, but he remained hidden for several days, then set off with a Belgian for the Dutch frontier. After many dangers and adventures, he got across the frontier into Holland, crossed Holland and came to England; then went across to France again.

Sir Douglas sent for him at once and he had the honour of lunching with the Field-Marshal, who listened to his story of adventure with great delight. Some time later, when Marshal Foch was at headquarters, Sir Douglas told him all about the airman, and in order that he might be presented to the French Commander-in-Chief, he was sent

for. But, unfortunately, at that time he was actually in the air, and, of course, Marshal Foch could not wait. But amongst other honours that adorn that airman's breast are the Croix de Guerre and the Médaille Militaire, which mark, whether he knows it or not, Marshal Foch's great appreciation.

Needless to say, Sir Douglas recommended him for high distinctions also.

The work which some of our officers did behind the German lines was very remarkable and exceedingly dangerous. I remember one night getting the shock of my life. Dinner was over and my master was just retiring. I was taking his jack-boots along the corridor of the train to my quarters for cleaning when I heard a challenge, a reply, a request to advance and give the countersign, then the impact of a rifle-butt with the ground—the sentry was satisfied.

But it was unusual for anyone to come to the train at this hour, so I just watched for a moment round the corner of my doorway to see who it was. It was an officer wearing a long greatcoat, the collar of which was turned up, whilst his cap was down over his eyes. He coughed slightly in the corridor,

then turned his collar down and began to divest himself of the overcoat as he walked along.

There was something unfamiliar about the colour of the uniform, to my eye, and I followed him. Into the corridor of the next coach he went—the one beyond was Sir Douglas Haig's. His coat was off now. To my horror and consternation it was a German general! I had no revolver in my hand, otherwise I honestly believe I would have pipped him then and there.

It must be remembered that my master—the British Commander-in-Chief—was lying within a few yards. I did not consider twice. I streaked the intervening distance between us like a leopard and was on his back. He came down with a thump and a rattle as the scabbard of his sword caught the floor.

"What the hell—!" he began. Then doors opened and two officers came out.

"By Jove, Secrett, what's this?" said one.

"My God!" exclaimed the other who promptly darted back for a revolver.

The "German general" had risen by now, closely held by one of the staff-officers and myself.

"A nice hospitable homecoming!" he said. "Don't stop, please. I think you've only broken about half-a-dozen ribs and an arm —go on—carry on!"

He removed a grey wig and began to take off a long grey upturned moustache. Then we all saw that it was a colonel of the Secret Service upon a special visit to Sir Douglas. He had returned from a spot quite close to German General Headquarters.

Needless to say I was very apologetic. But all the others laughed uproariously, and the colonel himself admitted that it was thoughtless to show himself in his very efficient disguise without notice.

The next morning when I awakened him, Sir Douglas, glancing at my hand, said:

"I see you barked your fingers in the scrimmage last night, Secrett?"

"Very little, sir!" I replied. He grinned —but that was all he ever said about it.

CHAPTER XII

AMONG THE TOMMIES

I HAVE sometimes heard it said that the late Lord Haig had not a very keen sense of humour. He was considered to be exceedingly reserved, and, though he ever had a pleasant word for all ranks, he rarely joked.

But that is not by any means exactly true. Lord Haig had a very keen sense of humour, which found expression in many ways. Perhaps one reason why his jokes were not more frequent or more publicly uttered is to be found in the fact that, traced to its source, humour mostly depends upon the discomfiture of its victim, or the thing aimed at. The very "humorous" man, the born "comic", is frequently somewhat unscrupulous in his methods, and places the advantage of his joke before the discomfiture of his butt every time.

That would have been impossible for Lord Haig, who was inherently a kindly man, ever considerate of the feelings of those about him, whatever their social rank. But, with that reservation remembered, a few illustrations will serve to show that the Field-Marshal had quite a good sense of humour; he could both pass a joke and accept one.

To illustrate that, I will relate a hospital experience. It must be remembered that the introduction of intoxicants into hospitals by the patients, either for their own use or for that of their comrades, was prohibited.

This rule was strenuously combated by the Tommies. There were all sorts of ways of getting a "wee drappie" into the wards. The French girls, knowing the craving of the Tommy for a drop of the "wine that maketh glad the heart of man", used to conspire with those Tommies who were allowed out to smuggle bottles into the hospital, and these bottles were hidden in all sorts of queer places.

Haig himself drank very little. He was exceedingly abstemious, but he was no bigot, and would not have the slightest

objection to the Tommy having his beer or drop of whisky at ordinary times. He strongly upheld the hospital authorities, however, in their wise regulations.

No matter how busy he was and however little time he had for personal relaxation, he considered it his duty to make frequent visits to hospitals, chat to the patients, and see that they had for their comfort all that was possible.

One day he was visiting a certain hospital; entering a ward unexpectedly, he was just in time to see a brawny Scot replace the cork in a flask and hide it quickly under the bedclothes. Haig went to his bed at once, asked him who he was, and what he suffered from. He elicited the fact that the patient was a Highlander, suffering from severe gunshot wounds in the legs. Looking round to see that nobody was within earshot, the Field-Marshal leaned over the cot and whispered:

"What have you got in that flask, Jock?"

The quick-witted Scotsman immediately whispered back:

"Just a wee drappie o' the best wine o' Scotland, sirr—a drap o' Haig!"

The Field-Marshal tried hard to restrain a smile, but he was inwardly convulsed with laughter as he turned away. I don't think the authorities would have had the heart to rob the smuggler of his treasure after that !

Another occasion I remember showed a pawky type of humour :

A concert was due to take place near a certain army headquarters. Haig always did all he could to promote concerts and other entertainments for the troops. Some of the artistes who went to France were actually his guests at Headquarters. These guests included Harry Lauder and several well-known American artistes.

Upon this occasion certain American artistes were appearing who had gone all over the Front entertaining the men, sometimes at great personal risk, and Haig made a special journey to attend, in order personally to thank them.

When he got near to the marquees he got lost in the dark, and found himself wandering around between two marquees and getting mixed up in the tent-ropes. He extricated himself and was just passing the opening of a marquee when a soldier came out, just a little

bit the worse for wear—it was a wet canteen. Sir Douglas told me the story :

"Hey, old cock," the soldier greeted him, "can you lend me a bob until Friday?" Haig looked at him closely, though he scarcely could see him in the dim light, and came to the conclusion that the man had made a perfectly genuine mistake.

"All right," he said, putting his hand in his pocket and producing a shilling. "See that you send it back on Friday. This is my address, on this envelope." He put the shilling and an addressed envelope into the Tommy's hand. What the Tommy thought when he read the title and address on the envelope is beyond imagination. However, whatever he did think he evidently concluded he had better honour his debt, for on Friday evening Haig said to me with a grin :

"I've got my bob back, Secrett!"

I remember another very amusing occasion when Haig indulged in a little sly humour at the expense of the great French *generalissimo*, Marshal Joffre.

It was at a lunch at our headquarters on the train which was attended by the King, the Prince of Wales, M. Poincaré, Marshal

Foch, General Pétain, M. Painlévé, and, of course, Marshals Haig and Joffre. I have in my possession the actual menu, which reads:

MENU

Dejeuner

Oeufs Glacès a la Russe

Poularde Rotie

Viande Froide

Salade

Mousse aux Fraises

Compote de Framboise

Desserts

Now, His Majesty had taken the pledge for the duration of the War, and, out of respect for that pledge, whenever His Majesty lunched or dined with Sir Douglas we never served wine. There were plenty of orange-drinks, lime- and lemon-drinks, but no intoxicants of any description.

The lunch began, the soup was served, and then the fish appeared. I noticed old "Papa"

Joffre looking about for the waiter and meaningly eyeing his empty wine-glass.

"I think Marshal Joffre wants the bread!" said Haig to the waiter. I thought there was a twinkle in his eye when he spoke. The waiter took the bread round to Joffre, who really didn't need it, but, having heard Haig direct the bread to be brought round, took a piece.

But he still looked at his empty glass and gave the waiter a little cough and a lift of his eyebrows. I knew perfectly well what the old gentleman wanted—I had served him so often!

The entrée was served, and "Papa" was still looking dubiously at the waiter and the empty wine-glasses.

"I think Marshal Joffre wants some more bread," again said Sir Douglas to the waiter. Then I knew that he was teasing Joffre for the purpose.

Marshal Joffre took another piece of bread, though he looked as if he would have liked to use it as a missile! The next moment the King addressed him, and he immediately gave a very interesting account, in French, of some experiences in Morocco.

After lunch, Sir Philip Sassoon, Sir Douglas's private secretary, who had seen the little comedy of the non-appearance of wine, tactfully engaged Marshal Joffre to one side and carefully explained the circumstances, offering him something in the saloon next to the dining-room.

But the old gentleman would not have any! If he couldn't have a glass of wine with his lunch in a reasonable manner he wasn't going to have a surreptitious one afterwards. He could very easily wait until he returned to his own headquarters.

In charge of the actual food arrangements at Headquarters we had the head waiter from a famous London club of which Haig was a member. Haig brought him out, put three stripes on his arm, and had him run the food arrangements as a sort of butler.

Now this man was a very decent sort of chap. I always got on very well with him, but he was a really out-and-out Cockney in his speech; he simply couldn't say his "r's" to save his life. He would say "wope" for rope!

His pronunciation was a source of constant delight to Haig. One night this head waiter

got rather flurried and started to serve the wine the wrong way round the table.

Haig spotted it in a second.

"Hey!" he called. "Where do you fink you're going to, eh? Going to the Norf Pole? What?"

The head waiter immediately corrected himself and soon afterwards came running out to me:

"Blimey!" he exclaimed. "What do you fink he's been an' arst me? Arst me if I was goin' to the Norf Pole, he did!"

I am perfectly certain he did not see the joke, and I certainly did not disillusion him!

Haig often travelled in a manner much different to what may be imagined fitting to the Commander-in-Chief. No special train for him; no destroyer did he need, unless urgent appeals for his presence compelled their use. If it was necessary for his headquarters train to be in a certain place he never moved it to take him down to the coast, but travelled on an ordinary train and crossed on the ordinary leave-boat with the Tommies.

Upon one of these occasions I remember

him being nearly torpedoed in the Channel. A German submarine appeared, showed its conning tower, and fired two torpedoes, one of which just missed our ship by inches.

"They mean to do it, somehow, Secrett!" he observed with a smile.

I remember perfectly well one occasion when Haig hugely enjoyed a joke aboard the leave-boat. He went aboard late, and the senior transport officer, who was looking for Haig, actually missed him. Haig was wearing a rough British Warm and had his red cap-band concealed by khaki flaps —well down over his eyes. The boat was packed and Haig stood on the deck with all the other Tommies. It was pitch dark.

One of the Tommies offered him a "fag", which he took instantly. Then a general grousing began around him about what a good time the fellows at home were having, and the officers on the staff—and what a rotten time the boys were having "up the line".

Sir Douglas listened to it all. Only the outlines of the men's faces could be seen. No distinguishing marks were visible on Haig's overcoat.

"Don't you think some of these here brass hats want blinkin' well shootin', chum?" a man asked Haig.

"Of course," he replied instantly. "Some of them want burning, don't they?"

"I can see you're an edyercated man!" replied the first. Haig bowed humbly. "Now what I says is this: What they wants to do is to make fellows like you and me officers. We been an' seen the Jerrys, we 'ave. Fought 'em! Don't we know best what oughter be done? Hey? What good is a little something-something haw-haw subaltern 'pared with you an' me, hey?"

The sentiment was widely echoed in the dark corner of the deck where the Field-Marshal stood surrounded by his totally oblivious Tommies. For a long while the grousing went on, then somebody struck up "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag!" and the song was taken up, the grousing gave way to full-throated harmony. And Haig stood there singing "Pack up your troubles in your old kit bag!" as heartily as any Tommy. I am certain he thoroughly enjoyed that trip. When the boat got to Southampton he went down the gangway with the rest in

the grey light of the early dawn, but a quick-eyed transport-officer spotted him in a second. He sprang to attention and shouted the warning down the quay :

"Guard turn out ! The Field-Marshal's salute !"

And a crowd of horrified Tommies then saw that their companion of the crossing who had heard all the bawdy jokes and fearful and weird criticisms of the High Command, was none less than Haig himself !

He turned to them :

"Good-bye, boys ! Mind you enjoy yourselves !" he said, and they raised a cheer then and there. I don't think I know another general who would have been capable of hiding his identity like that for so long. The amazing part of it was that Haig was never familiar with lower ranks. He was perfectly friendly, but he kept everybody exactly in his place without appearing patronizing. Some of the Canadian and the American generals used to drink with their men and call them, and be called, by their Christian names.

Haig could never have done that. He managed to combine a great dignity with a great sympathy. He talked gently to Tommies

as though he were talking to an equal who was somewhat a stranger to him, never familiar, never condescending, but always with great respect. That was one of the secrets of his great popularity with Tommies.

The British soldier loathes like poison to be "talked down to". Haig instinctively treated him with respect; it was no strain for him to do so, he simply conveyed what he felt.

On these trips to London, which usually lasted two days, he managed to look in at Kingston Hill to see Lady Haig. Very rarely, however, was he able to be more than forty-eight hours absent from his headquarters, and in nine cases out of ten, though he came over in the leave-boat, he went back by destroyer in response to an urgent S.O.S. at G.H.Q.

CHAPTER XIII

THE SINGING COLONEL

AS is very well known, the conditions under which troops had to spend their days in France were deplorable. Often the occupation of water-logged trenches, thigh-deep in mud, turned clothing and boots into a filthy pulp, while, in dry weather, vermin successfully challenged the most brilliant chemists and inventors of insecticides.

All sorts of arrangements were made to combat the evil habits of lice, and one of these was the complete destruction of verminous clothing, warm baths, and a completely new rig-out when the rest-camps were reached after relief from the trenches.

Where such a sweeping solution was not possible, arrangements were made for the clothing to be pressed with scorching hot irons while the men bathed, and it was almost always possible to change the underclothing.

One day Sir Douglas was driving along near a rest-camp upon some tour of inspection. By the side of the road was an old disused mill, and all round it were Tommies newly returned from the trenches. In the upper floors of the mill the windows were thrown open wide, and French girls were catching the garments of the Tommies for other girls back in the rooms to press with hot irons.

In the lower floors and outside in what had been open drying sheds, Tommies were having baths. The arrangements were extremely unconventional and primitive. They would certainly have shocked Mrs. Grundy—they did more, they shocked Sir Douglas Haig.

He stopped the car and approached the weird cleansing "parade".

"Where is the officer-in-charge ?" he asked.

The scene was one of the most hilariously comic I ever saw. Those Tommies under the Field-Marshal's eye strove to look dignified and solemn, those behind his back were in convulsions of laughter. A subaltern, his face as red as a beetroot, popped a head around a rain-barrel and called out :

"Beg pardon, sir. I will be on parade in one moment, sir!"

Haig looked at him. The unfortunate lieutenant was signalling frantically to a pretty French girl above his head to pass his shirt and tunic down. But the girl, together with her friends at the windows, was far too busy cheering the British commander, whom they all recognized.

The more the subaltern called for his garments the more the girl at the window waved them, calling out:

"Vive le bon Haig! Vive le bon Maréchal Anglais!"

I don't know how long the comedy would have lasted, but I slipped down and lent the officer a great-coat so that he could appear before the Commander-in-Chief. Sir Douglas told him that, however necessary the parade might be, it was up to him to see that it was carried out more decorously.

The officer apologized and promised to better organize the arrangements in the future, and then Sir Douglas got back into his car. The young officer was so terrified at being seen again in such ultra-*deshabille* that I had nearly to tear my great-coat off his back!

Anything indecorous always offended Sir Douglas Haig. In all emergencies he was neat and modest. Officers skipping about with scarcely any clothing on, and sometimes none at all, to take their morning tubs, always annoyed him.

Similarly, while he liked a joke, anything savouring of the Rabelaisian offended him, even amongst men only.

Upon one occasion I accompanied him to the temporary headquarters of an ordnance officer on the lines of communication. For some time an order had been existent calling for special salvage efforts, and it was this officer's duty to render to Headquarters a return of the number of shells salved which had been previously abandoned through hasty movements of ammunition columns and batteries.

While he was going over the figures with the major commanding the department, a column of troops went by, marching at ease and singing lustily.

It was part of a division newly out from home, marching up by easy stages to the line to relieve other forces in the trenches.

The day was swelteringly hot, and all the

men were marching along with tunics open and shirt-collars loosened. As they marched they sang, lustily, a song more ribald than anything I had ever before heard—and I have heard a few songs in my time! The tune went with a good lilt, and the words were obviously well-known to the battalion.

Now Sir Douglas also had heard—and sang—a good many lusty tunes in his day. He frowned a little at certain versions of "Come Landlord Fill the Flowing Bowl"; he frowned heavily at the authorized version of "Mademoiselle from Armentières", but still, he never interfered. He pretended not to notice if he heard the famous marching song when he was travelling, and passed on.

But this song beat all comers! To it the choral record of the damsel of Armentières was a Sunday School hymn!

"Good Heavens!" said Sir Douglas, crossing to the window. "Tut! Tut! Tut! Ah! just as I thought. It is the rear companies. The colonel, riding at the head of the column, is in happy ignorance of the latest home-brewed musical effort!. My horse, Secrett!"

So I got him his horse and he mounted at the door. Followed by an aide, he galloped

to the head of the column. I went immediately behind, of course. As we galloped up and Haig was recognized, the singing stopped as though by magic. Platoon after platoon quietened down, but he always overtook the singing!

When he arrived at the head of the column, the colonel, a big, jolly-looking fat man, was riding with his second-in-command beside him. His tunic was open wide, his collar and tie undone; underneath his cap he wore a huge khaki handkerchief which was flowing in the light breeze; but, best of all, his head was thrown back and he was singing the perfectly appalling chorus with the rest of them!

"I must congratulate you upon your voice, colonel!" shouted Sir Douglas from his charger.

When the colonel saw the identity of the horseman who had so suddenly pulled up alongside him, he wrenched the handkerchief from his head and made feverish attempts to straighten his shirt and button his tunic. He called his battalion to attention, but Sir Douglas put up his hand:

"No—that's all right!" he said, "March easy!" The colonel shouted the command.

"I like the tune," said Sir Douglas, emphasizing the word "tune", "but you must know that in any circumstances those words are inexcusable!" He acknowledged the colonel's stammered apologies with a little nod and then rode back to his interrupted inspection of the ordnance officer's returns.

I once saw an incident which must have been exceedingly unpleasant to the late Field-Marshal. A certain great lady came to Headquarters to arrange for some voluntary hospital workers and certain entertainments for the Tommies. This lady had a vocabulary which would have graced a trooper with a couple of lame horses to lead. At heart one of the very best in the world, there was nothing too much for her to do for the Tommies. She, I think, purposely made herself ultra-coarse in the mistaken belief that she was showing them what a "sport" she was.

She was wrong, because she only puzzled and bewildered the Tommies. From whatever class the men came, they were always accustomed to treating ladies with respect, and this lady used words which the average

Tommy would not have used even to a very different type of woman.

At lunch she dropped several "rocks" in the shape of very "advanced" expressions. Sir Douglas once looked up startled, and I saw two junior staff officers at freezing point. The lady prattled on, and, the more she talked, the stronger became her expressions. After a while, the Field-Marshal, with a frown, leaned over to her—she sat on his right—and said something in an undertone. The lady coloured and raised her eyebrows, and seemed about to say something sharply back to him, when Sir Douglas again said something which could not have been more than two or three words.

She looked at him still with raised eyebrows, and he gazed steadily at her with that characteristic set of his jaw whenever he was sticking out for some disputed point.

Then he addressed a remark to someone else and the conversation became general again. The lady was very quiet for the rest of the meal, and it was evident that she had received a very strong snub.

She had four engagements the next morning, and then was to meet a French general

at lunch, for she was doing a good deal of work for the French Tommies as well as our own. The list of guests was given to me the next morning and I noticed that she was not on it. Knowing that the previous arrangement was for her to attend, I showed a copy of the list to a staff officer and asked him if it was correct.

"I don't know," he said. "She certainly should be at lunch, according to programme, but the list came to me from Sir Douglas in pencil—here it is!" He produced Sir Douglas's draft which had been handed to him earlier.

"If there is any danger of a mistake, you had better ask him," he said.

So I went to the Field-Marshal and pointed out to him that, according to the programme he had given me, the lady ought to be on the list of guests.

He glanced at the list.

"Take the list as it is!" he said. That was all the comment he made, and, later in the morning, I took a note to the lady. I was not told to wait for an answer, but I did, in case there was one.

Her maid, a pleasant girl, came to the

door of the château at which she was billeted:

"Her Ladyship's compliments to Sir Douglas," she said, "and there is no reply!"

Her Ladyship herself fully opened a door which had been left ajar:

"I said nothing about compliments!" she said. "I simply said there was no reply!"

Whenever Sir Douglas was sarcastic, which was very rarely, there was never any real bitterness in his sarcasm. It was more to amuse than to hurt.

For instance: the ex-Premier of Spain and a very great Spanish Duke visited Headquarters when we were well up towards Festubert. The line was very quiet there at the time, and the Spanish visitors expressed a wish to get as near as they could to the forward positions.

Sir Douglas personally escorted them to a quiet point of the line—almost without notice. The division and the brigade knew we were coming, but the battalions had no idea that they were to be visited.

Nevertheless, as the day was a very quiet one on this front, Sir Douglas went on down

to the headquarters of one of the battalions. Here, in this part of the line, the ground was very swampy. Trenches were dug around pools of water and marshes, and the front-line was a good half-mile from the Germans. The intermediate ground was a series of posts between swamps and pools held by a sergeant or a lieutenant and a handful of men.

The Germans had some posts actually behind our advanced posts, and it frequently happened that our men strolled by mistake into the enemy lines, and we captured some of their men who had strayed.

The trenches were exceedingly irregular farther back, running in all directions, according to the contours and ill-nature of the ground. We were met near where the battalion headquarters were reported to be by a startled young lieutenant, who became all the more so when he saw Sir Douglas and retinue coming along the deep communication trench. He was presented to the Field-Marshal, who asked him how long he had been in the sector, and was informed that the battalion had only taken over forty-eight hours previously.

"Lead us to headquarters!" said Sir Douglas. "To Colonel Tredegar!" The youngster, flustered, led the way so far and then turned up a side trench. Along this he went for a while, the whole string following him. There was Sir Douglas and four aides, the army general and two aides, the corps commander and several staff officers, the divisional general and some of his staff, the brigadier, the brigade major, and two other officers, the Spanish noblemen and their aides, and those appointed to them by Sir Douglas.

On, on, we went, turning after turning, until at last, as he came round a corner, Sir Douglas spotted the tail of the procession just going on in front. The confused young subaltern, not knowing the ground well and being thoroughly flustered, had missed his track and was going round in a series of varied circles!

"I say!" exclaimed Sir Douglas. "You are mistaken, my dear fellow. I said I wanted Colonel Tredegar—not a game of 'Follow my leader'!"

Happily, while he still talked and the youngster got more flustered than ever, a

quartermaster-sergeant came along on his way to headquarters and set us right.

Later on, when this subaltern distinguished himself and his general recommended him for a decoration, he appended a note for the Field-Marshal's eye :

"This particular Smith is 'Follow-my-leader Smith', you know !"

And "Follow-my-leader Smith" got the M.C., so he evidently was not so flustered in action as amongst the brass hats !

CHAPTER XIV

ODD STORIES

IN France, for labour purposes, we had a large number of Chinese, brought by contract for the duration of the War. The peculiarities of these troops used to be an endless source of amusement to Haig, though upon one epic occasion, when the necessity arose, they actually fought in such a berserker manner that Sir Douglas said afterwards:

"By Jove! I wish I had a whole army of those chaps, properly trained!"

The occasion was the unpleasant position which arose after the German counter-attack at Cambrai. In retiring under heavy German attacks, our troops lost direction at a certain point and there was a serious danger of a break in the line, through which the Germans could have poured. In moments like these, Sir Douglas always believed in being on the

spot to see with his own eyes, as far as possible, what the circumstances were.

He had a perfect reporting system, but always hankered after that first-hand look. Leaving his headquarters in charge of his chief, he would travel as far as he could towards the scene of operations. That was why he caused such nervousness in the days when he commanded the First Army at Ypres—he wouldn't leave the fighting!

So, upon this occasion, he motored down to well within artillery range and called at three reporting stations. There was news of fierce fighting to the south and more to the north, but, straight in front, communication seemed to have broken down. It appeared as though our troops in front were holding firm but had lost their means of communication.

The Commander-in-Chief decided to drive along as far as possible, relying upon meeting signallers or hand messengers. Every hamlet and village through which we went was full of straggling troops, wounded men, transport officers, bewildered, scarcely knowing which way to direct stragglers. Singularly, little transport was on the road along which we

drove. Away to the north we heard the roar of artillery. We passed an emplacement for heavy French Garrison Artillery which had departed. Further on we saw, in the distance, a party of horsemen.

Sir Douglas put his glasses up and gazed for a while at the group in the distance. Then he leant forward and instructed the chauffeur in perfectly-calm accents, with words which made the rattled chauffeur nearly upset us in the ditch :

"Turn at once and drive back as quickly as you can. The line has gone—those are German cavalry in front !"

The chauffeur certainly did not stand upon the order of his going as he went back ! The horn was bellowing all the while and stragglers on the road scattered before the Field-Marshal's car. At a village, Sir Douglas got out and called a transport officer to him, explaining in a few words what he thought had occurred. Then he managed to establish telephonic communication with Headquarters, arranged for the instant checking of every point of the line, and ordered troops to be sent to that particular place at once.

In the meantime, he found that to the

north we were holding the enemy steadily, and that the French and ourselves were in good formation south. It was a gap of something like two miles that was the critical point. Forces were rushed north by the general in the south and forces were rushed south by the northern general, but several hours must elapse before a consolidated line could be made.

Meanwhile, knowledge of the presence of Sir Douglas in that little village had gone round like wildfire. Chinese crept out of funkholes, slightly wounded Tommies appeared, A.S.C. men were roped in, medical orderlies, chaplains, and all manner of army "details". A rough sort of line was formed.

Files were sent out to the north and south to contact with forces that were speeding along on the way. Having established something like a line of sorts and set the transport officer on the telephone, there to remain until he was relieved by a senior officer, Sir Douglas left. We met reinforcements marching at the double just outside the village. Within two hours the line was perfect and could have stood anything, except, of course, continuous heavy attacks.

But before that occurred, that strange motley line of Chinks and chaplains, cooks and coolies, stretcher bearers and Army Service men, actually met and repelled the first charge of German Uhlans! It was reported afterwards that one great Chink, who stood over six foot high, felled the horse of one of the Germans by striking it between the eyes with a mell! Then he took the sword from the thrown cavalryman and did epic work with it. He himself accounted for four of the enemy.

The German cavalry charge was definitely held, and before their main attacking lines of infantry could appear the reserves had arrived.

From that time onwards Sir Douglas always had a soft spot in his heart for the Chinks. Everybody at Headquarters had laughed at the strange fellows who utterly refused to work in the wet; but, after that episode behind Cambrai, they shot up tremendously in the opinion of the staff. The most amazing thing about them was their absolute staying power. They stood—side by side with their allies—who, at any rate, were trained, even though they were non-combatants. They

never budged, but fought with anything they could lay their hands on!

Sir Douglas went out of his way to provide for their comfort, but it must be confessed that their ways were a great trial to him. I remember one tall Chink who was a sort of sergeant-major amongst them. He invariably wore a silk hat and seemed to exert great authority. He worked quite near where General Headquarters was at the time. Sir Douglas used to salute him as he passed, in reply to his low obeisance. The Chink's silk hat used to nearly sweep the floor when Sir Douglas passed.

He had a regular tariff of salutes, this tall Chinaman. A regimental officer he would raise his hat to by half-an-inch; to any officer with red tabs, he would definitely lift his hat; gilt braid and red tabs would secure a bow as well. A general would receive a comparatively low bow, but when the Field-Marshal Commander-in-Chief appeared, then his obeisance was a sight to be seen! And when he did this wonderful salute, all the other Chinks would do their best to emulate him.

This used to amuse Sir Douglas very much.

One day—a Monday—Sir Douglas missed his tall Chink. Another, lesser man was in charge. This gentleman wore a khaki tunic, a pair of red Zouave trousers, and an old brown bowler hat. Sir Douglas stopped and asked where the big man was and was informed, after a significant pause, that he was not able to honour himself by presenting himself before the illustrious and exalted Field-Marshal upon that morning.

The reason, arrived at after long flowery speeches, was the very excellent one that the tall man was dead. The manner of his death was partially divulged only after another long session of questioning by Sir Douglas.

The only thing that could be elicited was that the big man had scooped the pool at faro on the Saturday night. That was the only reason his successor could think of to account for his death—that and the secondary fact that a knife with a blade eighteen inches long was found sticking out of his back and all the winnings at faro gone.

That week three Chinese mysteriously disappeared, and at different subsequent times their bodies were found—in every case murdered. Without doubt, the

search for the faro winnings was still in progress!

Gambling was always a thing which Sir Douglas tried to stop, and now he made most stringent orders against the permissibility of faro in any billet or recreation-room. But the tricks the Chinese got up to to circumvent the order were far more ingenious than any plan of inspection to prevent them playing could be.

They doped the drink of the N.C.O. in charge of their huts; they played in their washing-places; they posted sentries in their shelters, when it was raining, to warn them of the approach of strangers while they played.

But I think the most ingenious trick they worked was good enough to be specially recorded. There was a Buddhist priest accompanying the main part of the contingent and the ordering of services was left a good deal in his hands.

From this time on it was noticed that the services became much longer and much more frequent. Rarely a day passed without there being a special call to prayer. The order of service was also peculiar. Little groups of

Chinese had to leave their places and gather round the priest on a mat on the ground. This was supposed to be a particularly holy little group and no European must approach it.

This went on for about a fortnight and then complaints began to pour in about the uncanny extension of their services. The priest was remonstrated with, but he pleaded the well-known Army order on religious observance. At last a suspicion fell on the whole business, because Chinese were frequently noticed arguing about money after the services.

One day a N.C.O. made his way towards the little group, despite loud protests. The priest raised himself from his prostrate position to protest, but he was too late. In the centre of the "holy" group was spread a faro game!

That put "paid" to the religious exercises of the Chinese for a while!

But, of course, the Chinks were not the only troops in France who caused a good deal of trouble with gambling. Sir Douglas Haig had a rooted aversion to all gambling, but the well-known soldier's game of "Crown and Anchor" was his particular *bete noire*!

He caused stringent regulations to be issued making it a penal offence to play "Crown and Anchor"! But any old soldier could have told him that to endeavour to blot out "Crown and Anchor" was like trying to stop the Chinks playing faro! Nevertheless, Sir Douglas put up a very game fight against the evil. Many men were punished and certainly some of the most dangerous "joints" were closed down.

Lest his attitude to this game may seem fanatical, let me say, at once, that it caused a tremendous amount of trouble, and even crime. Young recruits, newly out, put all their "wages" on the magic squares and often lost the lot.

Jealousy of the winners caused many fights. The quartermaster-sergeants were always advancing a few shillings, which went on "Crown and Anchor". Apart from this, there were plenty of undesirable characters in the new armies who knew how to play "Crown and Anchor" *very well indeed!*

I remember one little man, who belonged to a Yorkshire battalion. In civilian life I think he was a carter in the employ of a railway company, but he was an incorrigible gambler.

He had run a "Crown and Anchor" game in the billets, in the trenches—everywhere. When the new order came out he was placed under arrest for defying it, and tried by his colonel. He was let off with a caution. The next morning he was on the carpet again for setting out his "Crown and Anchor" cloth in the corner of the Y.M.C.A. tent while the Bishop of London was addressing the Tommies!

He got a week's detention for that. After this, the very night he came out, he moved up with his battalion to the front-line and was caught, still at the old game, in the small hours of the morning in a dug-out, raking in the pennies and sixpences of four comrades. He was taken before his colonel later in the day and sentenced to go with the wire-repairing party every morning for the rest of the term during which the battalion was in the trenches.

That didn't worry him. The little fat man was not a coward, and he scrambled over the parapet every morning and helped to mend the wire.

One morning, when he was so engaged, the officer in charge of a scouting and listening

party was shot and wounded in No Man's Land. The party had encountered a German patrol.

In the fighting which developed the officer was left behind. At the first sound of the engagement the wiring party were called in and, of course, the little man was present when the report was received.

"Is it Ginger?" asked he of the lieutenant in charge of the trench. He could never say "sir" except under great difficulties. "Is it Ginger? Blimey, I used to work for his father in Bradford. I'm going to get him!"

And, without more ado, the little fat man scrambled over the parapet and waddled, rather than walked, over No Man's Land to search for the ginger-headed lieutenant.

He found him. Our fellows did not know whether to laugh or cry when they heard his broad Yorkshire voice addressing the Germans who were firing on him.

"Half-time, mates! I'm only taking a poor bloke in what's badly wounded! Use a bit o' sense!" A laugh from the German trenches testified that there was someone there—in authority also—who knew Yorkshire, for the

EARL HAIG WITH HIS STAFF ON MANŒUVRES

[To face page 178

firing ceased and he brought the lieutenant into the trench.

Everybody shook hands with him, and the incident was reported to the colonel who had previously punished him. Of course, he lifted the punishment immediately, and the next afternoon, Sunday, being a very quiet day, the colonel came round the forward positions and asked for him. He was taken to a dug-out. There in the light of a candle sat the little fat man, surrounded by half a dozen others with the "Crown and Anchor" cloth out again, calling for bets.

Well, I am certain that if the colonel could have gone away again he would have done so and laughed, but he could not. Moreover, there was a definite order that after three convictions for playing "Crown and Anchor" there had to be a court martial.

The colonel congratulated him upon his great gallantry and set him under arrest for playing "Crown and Anchor".

Reports of grave cases had to come before Headquarters, and so the colonel reported him and also attached a recommendation for a decoration for his gallantry. The case was so unusual that it came right up to Sir

Douglas, who laughed when he read both reports. Upon Sir Douglas's instructions he was let off, provided he would give his word of honour never to play again. He gave it immediately.

Six weeks after that Sir Douglas was going round visiting some wounded soldiers in one of the great Base hospitals. He entered a ward unexpectedly, where four men in night attire, with rugs round them, were gathered round the bed of a little fat man with his head bandaged:

"Now who wants a tanner on the lucky 'ook?" he was calling. "Who says a tanner on the old click 'ook?"

Sir Douglas with a frowning face went to the bed, and the others scattered:

"What is your name?" he asked.

"Jack X——!" replied the man. Haig turned to hide a smile and passed on!

CHAPTER XV

MORE ODD STORIES

I THINK it could be fairly said of Haig that, on the whole, he treated his Tommies with much greater leniency than he did his officers. Haig always had a very high ideal before him as to what an officer should be, and, so far as possible, he insisted upon all his officers following it.

He expected much more of an officer than he did a soldier. In cases of court martial, for instance, when an officer had had a temporary fit of nerves in front of the enemy, he sometimes waived the death sentence, particularly in the case of youngsters, but only after great consideration and anxious thought.

In the case of the Tommy he did so as soon as he could find a single mitigating circumstance.

Similarly, in cases of those overstaying

leave, with the men he recommended leniency and looked upon the matter as one of "Absent without leave", but in the case of officers he took a much more serious view and almost considered the offence "desertion".

Legally, of course, one has to be away for a certain time before the absence becomes desertion.

One night, when he was returning to the Front, as he walked along the crowded platform at Victoria, there was a little group struggling just in front of us. In the centre of three or four military police a man was swearing and lashing about with his hands. Near by stood a woman with a scared kiddie, and a baby in her arms. She was crying and begging the man in the mêlée to calm himself.

About were a number of returning Tommies, who, I could see, were on the point of interfering and perhaps rescuing the fellow in the middle of the scrum. They kept shouting to the police :

"Leave him alone you ——!" There followed uncomplimentary epithets. Haig went across and asked the corporal of police what was the matter.

"This man is drunk, sir," replied the

corporal. "He is returning from leave drunk and disorderly!"

"Let him go a moment, I'll speak to him!" Haig ordered and immediately the police fell back. I think the Tommy, who had been knocked about a bit, would have taken this opportunity to get his own back against some of them, because he made a rush forward, but Haig put out a hand on his shoulder and stayed him:

"Oh, try to stand to attention, Bob!" his poor wife exclaimed. "It's an officer!"

"Now what is the matter?" Haig asked him.

"I—I—" the man hiccoughed and stammered. He seemed to realize that he was talking to a high officer, for he made a strong effort to pull himself together. "I've been having a drop too much, sir," he got out at last. Then he was about to launch into a torrent of abuse about the military police, when Haig stopped him.

"Where is his pass?" he asked the police. The corporal handed it over at once.

"Ah, yes!" said Haig. "Up to-morrow. That will be all right; I'll just extend it twenty-four hours." He took out his fountain-pen, endorsed the pass and signed it,

making it valid for the following day. Then he turned to the woman with that kindly smile which won all hearts :

"Don't worry," he said. "I'm sure you'll get him here all right to-morrow night for this train, won't you ?"

And so, by a kindly act, he saved utter misery in that poor fellow's home, for it was bad enough for his wife to see him go to the Front, without all the disgrace of his being taken over by the military police and charged with drunkenness and perhaps assault.

Stories of Haig's interference in order to stand between Tommies and trouble are many. Even when he did this, he always did it gracefully ; he never did it in such a way as to make the officer or officers responsible for the punishment look ridiculous.

Even in the extreme cases when he was lifting the death sentence he always did it very carefully, recommending that such a line ought to be taken in the special circumstances, while acknowledging that they had done their duty quite correctly.

There was an occasion when a cavalryman got into serious trouble in Paris. I think he had gone there for a short leave and met some

girl with whom he had stayed for the period of his leave. It appeared that the girl was married, and before our cavalryman returned, her own husband—a French poilu—turned up and there had been a fracas.

Neighbours took sides with the Frenchman, who was very properly aggrieved, and our Tommy, who also had been deceived—at least, the majority of the women neighbours said so.

A free fight ensued, and, according to the evidence, our cavalryman had broken the heads of two gendarmes and placed himself right outside any chance of being handed over to the military authorities.

He was tried before a French Juge d'Instruction and put back until his victims came out of the hospital.

While awaiting trial, in despair the man wrote a letter to Sir Douglas Haig. He outlined his offence, told him how it came about, and expressed his great contrition. He also reminded the Commander-in-Chief that he had soldiered under him years ago when they were both in the same cavalry regiment.

Haig said to me:

"Secrett, do you remember old So-and-so?"

I said I did. "Well, he's been making a nice mess of things in Paris," Sir Douglas continued and told me something of the case, reading from the letter. I was dying to say:

"Are you going to do something for him, sir?" But it was not my place to, so I just waited. He smiled slightly, then frowned, and put the letter in his pocket without saying a word. I was very sorry for my old comrade, and, during the next day or so, I wondered if I dare approach Sir Douglas on the matter. But I knew the late Commander-in-Chief better than anybody breathing, and I knew exactly how far to go.

Had I approached him I should have been snubbed and it would have done the poor fellow in Paris no good. So I just waited. Three or four days after, Foch came to Headquarters, and, after greeting Haig and the staff, went into the dining-saloon to lunch.

When the lunch was over, Haig and Foch were left together in his room and remained in conference for some time. I had to go in several times in answer to calls, and upon the last occasion, when I brought their coats,

I saw Foch reading the letter of my old comrade.

The French Marshal had that quizzical smile on his face and his pince-nez shook as he chuckled over the reading. Haig sat on the other side of the table, his hands before him, watching his colleague's amusement with a quiet smile. When he had done reading, Foch laughed outright. He took his glasses off, and, in the midst of his laughter, said :

"*Mon Dieu ! mon ami, mais—*" and a lot more French too quick for me to catch. Haig joined in the laughter and said something to him in French. I could not understand what they were saying and was, in reality, longing to know what they were going to do.

They departed, and that evening Haig said to me with a twinkle in his eye:

"You heard what the French commander said about old So-and-so, didn't you ? I saw you listening intently !"

"Yes, sir !" I replied—it was no use contradicting him.

"Then that's all right," said Sir Douglas. "I think his view of the matter was a very shrewd one, wasn't it, Secrett ?"

"It was, sir!" I replied, wondering whether to ask outright or not. But, still smiling, Haig nodded, and I left his saloon.

Late that night when I was attending him as he prepared for bed, he said:

"Well, Secrett the discreet, you shall have the reward of patience. Marshal Foch is going to arrange to get our old swashbuckler out!"

That was my method always with Sir Douglas. Never to argue or never to presume; just to wait patiently and serve promptly, anticipate his wants, but never ask a question. And he appreciated that.

He looked upon me as absolutely reliable, trustworthy as granite, and it was sometimes a relief for him to have someone, however humble, to talk to, in the full consciousness that what he said would not be repeated. I never failed him to my knowledge.

Although Haig was essentially the friend of the "old sweat", the veteran of other wars, he had an unbounded admiration for the youngsters of the new armies. I remember an incident in 1915. A youngster, keen on joining the Army, and big for his years, enlisted at the age of fifteen.

He went through the battles of Ypres

and Neuve Chapelle, was slightly wounded once, and returned to the Front. Then someone at home reported the facts of his age and had him withdrawn—greatly against his desire. He petitioned his colonel to permit him to remain, but, of course, the colonel had no authority in the face of a War Office Order.

So the disgruntled young veteran went home to England, and from there in some Home Service battalion down on the East Coast he made his last bid to again go to France.

He wrote a letter to Sir Douglas Haig personally, in which he pointed out that he had been considered a good soldier. He had left all his friends at the Front and was now buried alive amongst a lot of grousing old men and C3 young men building trenches which would never be used and carrying heavy ammunition which would never be fired!

Someone saw fit to let Haig see the letter, and he read it carefully, then wrote a line to the lad's colonel in the old regiment to see what his record was exactly. The reply came back that he was an excellent

soldier, of Grammar School education, and very efficient. Only his youth had stopped him being given non-commissioned rank.

Then Haig did one of his kindly, yet characteristic, actions. He wrote the lad a letter with his own hand and told him that he was making arrangements for him to fill to better advantage the months which must intervene before he went out again. He told him to "soldier on" with a good heart, in whatever circumstances he found himself, and also told him that there were days when he, Haig, wished himself on the peaceful East Coast.

At the same time Haig arranged for his entry into Woolwich Staff College, and the result was that when the lad came out again, he had shown himself so apt a pupil that he was deemed worthy of a very responsible position. He was appointed staff-captain to one of the new army divisions.

Under the previous High Command, with few exceptions, the staff positions were held by men of wealth, influence, or aristocratic origin. With Sir Douglas merit counted, and merit only.

He was a great stickler for discipline and

correctness in details. I know he put the men's comfort before their appearance, but still, he liked to see smart parades. On the line of march when the men were tired or weary or hot he didn't mind at all the "March Easy" order. But he never quite accustomed himself to seeing officers similarly negligently dressed.

There was more excuse for privates. They wore rough and often ill-fitting clothes, heavy clothes, heavy boots, and carried a big load. Whatever the order, regimental officers, at any rate of senior rank, generally managed to dodge the rigours of the full "Marching Order" kit.

The strict order was that all platoon commanders should carry packs the same as the non-commissioned ranks, with ammunition and rifles as well as revolvers. Captains and company commanders were supposed to carry packs also, but not rifles or rifle ammunition, while field officers, from the rank of major upwards could, in certain circumstances, merely wear their Sam Browne belts, and carry their kit up on the battalion transport.

But this strict rule was scarcely ever

maintained. Once, upon an inspection, Haig gave the shock of their lives to the officers of a certain battalion.

He was inspecting a division formed up in mass near Poperinghe in Belgium.

He rode along the front with his staff and the divisional staff. The division stood splendidly, and Haig complimented the generals and the colonels upon their excellent appearance and other things.

Then he turned to the divisional general:

"Are the officers marching with rifles and ammunition, and greatcoats in packs?"

"Oh!—ah! yes, I think so!" said the major-general, turning to the brigadier nearest him. "That is so, isn't it?"

"Well—hum—" the brigadier coughed. "That is certainly the order which has gone through the brigade office to my battalions!" He was turning to one of his colonels when Haig stopped him.

"Oh! very well," he said, "that will be all right. We'll just take a battalion haphazard." He moved to the nearest battalion to him. Immediately an order was given to open ranks, and the Field-Marshal Commander-in-Chief began his inspection. He

went to the first platoon commander and asked if he had 200 rounds of ammunition.

"No, sir," replied the lieutenant with a red face.

Haig nodded.

"Why not ?"

The lieutenant stammered some excuse about it being usual only to take ammunition on certain route-marches.

"I'm learning !" said Haig. "Where's your rifle ?" The lieutenant with a redder face than ever began to stammer.

"I suppose you left it in the umbrella stand ?" asked Haig suavely. "Let's have a look at your pack !" In confusion the youngster began to take his pack off. It was a beautifully square pack ; his orderly must have spent great care on it.

The straps were undone.

"Let me see !" said Haig. "There should be greatcoat, spare pair of boots, ground-sheet, Shirt, socks— What on earth is this weird and wonderful contraption ?"

Sir Douglas stooped down and pulled out an air pillow blown up inside a framework of match-boarding to make the sides of the pack nice and square—and light, of course.

In utter confusion the lieutenant began to fasten up his pack again, the eyes of generals, colonels, majors, and worst of all—Tommies —the latter gloating—on his utter discomfiture.

Haig examined two other packs and found them both about like the first one.

"There would appear to be some misunderstanding about marching order!" he commented quietly to the divisional general. From that day forward, in that division there was no misunderstanding about marching order!

CHAPTER XVI

A CAPITAL JOKE

THE persistence of Sir Douglas was proverbial, in small things as well as in great. I think that persistence was one of the keynotes to his character. He had unlimited patience, and when he made up his mind that a certain thing could be done—it *was* done.

Just to give a little illustration, I recall an occasion when the battery of the electric torch which I used to place by his bedside every night went wrong. A new battery was obtained and then the bulb got broken. There was only one bulb to be found, and it had a defect: the thread on the screw went the wrong way, so that it was impossible to fix it into the torch. I tried for perhaps twenty minutes and then handed it to Sergeant Rump, a colleague of mine at Headquarters. He did his best for another

twenty minutes or so, and by that time Sir Douglas was calling.

"Haven't you got that lamp right yet, Secrett ?" he asked.

"No, sir !" I replied. "The thread of the screw is wrong and it won't screw in."

"Nonsense !" he replied. "Give it to me. I'll make it go in. It went in before and it must go in again. Give it to me."

He started fumbling with it. I made all the arrangements for him to get to bed and placed a candle and matches within reach of the bed to take the place of the torch, which I was certain could not be put right without another bulb with a proper thread. He was still tinkering with the torch when he dismissed me, and I retired.

In the morning, at half-past six, I awakened him as usual, and as soon as he opened his eyes he looked up at me with a grin like a schoolboy :

"I fixed that torch, Secrett," he said. "It took me three hours, and I broke two pairs of scissors and a button-hook, but I mended it all right !"

That was typical of him. He would never give in.

Nevertheless, his judgements were swift. If he had cause to suspect or dislike a thing, he seldom changed his mind. When the Portuguese troops came to France, Sir Douglas welcomed the reinforcements eagerly. They were given proper training to bring them up to date in modern warfare, and, after a while, placed in a sector of the line that was fairly quiet.

It was rather a curious thing, but I traced it many times, that when new troops went into a quiet sector that sector began to liven up in some mysterious way. Whether it was that the Germans got wind of the change in front of them and determined to try to steal a march on raw material, I cannot say, but the Portuguese had that unhappy experience.

They underwent a fairly intensive shell-fire almost as soon as they entered. The next day a considerable bombardment followed, and, in a mist which came down, the Germans attacked.

Unnerved by the unwonted experience, the new troops did not give a very good account of themselves. It was considered at Headquarters that perhaps more experienced

officers might have steadied them. As it was, they were very quickly in full retreat. Needless to say, that caused the commanders on both sides of them to retire somewhat, in order to keep contact, and a generally-dangerous situation began to develop.

Fortunately the general on their immediate left took in the situation, and, instead of retiring, he attacked on his flank with his reserves and called frantically for more troops. Quickly a division was rushed up, and the German flood stayed. But a very awkward situation nearly developed. Had the Germans dreamt that they would have such little difficulty in their first attacks they would have been prepared to follow up their victory to better advantage. As it was, I think the Germans were as surprised as everybody else at the remarkable success of their little "try-on."

Sir Douglas had very definite likes and dislikes. He had a tremendous regard for the Colonial troops; he made every allowance for the irregularities in discipline according to the British standards in the Aussies, the Anzacs, the Canadians, and the South Africans, and he thoroughly liked their respective commanders.

When the Americans entered the field, the first contingents of troops were eagerly inspected by the Commander-in-Chief.

He was impressed with the appearance of the men and liked what he saw of their field training, but as only a limited number got over to begin with it was impossible, or at least highly undesirable, to have so small an Army operating as an independent unit, like the Belgian Army, for instance.

Moreover, Sir Douglas, who had a perfectly-trained staff, all of whom knew his methods and carried out his instructions in the letter and spirit, did not relish the idea of an entirely new and untrained staff of officers operating in a section of the line.

So he proposed the brigading of American troops with British brigades. That meant that all the American Sammies would have their own company officers and battalion officers, and all their own methods, but they would operate under British brigadiers alongside British battalions.

This was immediately resented. Naturally, the Americans did not want their men under foreign generals, however efficient. A compromise was, however, at last reached. It was

decided, for a start, to brigade the Americans with British brigades, according to Sir Douglas's idea, and then, later, when the staffs had had a bit more training and the Americans had more troops out, they could operate independently, with the reservation that they would be under the supreme command of Sir Douglas and obey his orders.

So long as that arrangement held, the Americans did well. They were sound in defence and advanced alongside our own men in attack. But when, at last, they had a considerable Army in the field, their first operations were not too brilliant.

There was at a section of the line a sort of German peninsula sticking out into the French line, which had been held for two years. It was high ground, and dominated the country for miles around. There was a kind of isthmus joining this peninsula of heavily-fortified ground to what might be called the German mainland.

The Americans planned a simultaneous attack to be thrown against the north and south sides of the isthmus, to meet in the middle and cut off the Germans on the peninsula. It was a perfectly sound operation,

and if it had come off they would have straightened an important piece of the line and bagged some thousands of prisoners and many forts and guns.

The Americans fought well. They pressed the attack, but whether from faulty map-reading or from bad staff work, they lost direction. Instead of meeting, the two attacking forces overlapped, and were fighting in opposite directions. One force was gradually fronting east and the other west.

In this situation one of our divisions had to be sent to their rescue. The Americans suffered great losses, and so did we, in straightening things out for them. Later, they did better, but the War ended before the full force of the American Army could be felt.

The Americans were paid something like six times the pay of our own men, and this was a source of continual dissatisfaction. In the towns and villages where both Armies were billeted, human nature being what it is, the Americans were given preference in all things. They could simply put everything up under the noses of our

men. Many nasty little incidents occurred because of this.

Of course, it was unreasonable to blame the Americans. They got more money, and good luck to them, but it was very hard for our own poor fellows, who had to bear the burden and heat for sixpence a day if a man was married!

The American greeted the High Command affably—as a rather strange equal with obsolete traditions and "quaint" ideas!

I think Haig's dislike of the Americans in some strange way always remained with him, for after the War, when I accompanied him on his famous world tour, though he was often asked to visit the United States, he never did. I think he would have visited America some time in the autumn of 1928, had he not died.

Sir Douglas very rarely showed dislike of persons, but he had certain very definite prejudices. It was difficult sometimes to trace where the modified antipathy came in, but there is no escaping the fact, he certainly did take very definite prejudices against certain people.

He got on excellently with the chaplains

attached to the Army, of whatever Faith. General Booth visited him at Headquarters, and was on the most friendly terms with him. Sir Douglas himself was a Presbyterian ; there was a Presbyterian minister attached to Headquarters. Every Sunday morning Sir Douglas attended the service at the little temporary chapel which was constructed or utilized near General Headquarters. The minister and Sir Douglas were close friends, and he never went to the Field-Marshal with a request for anything appertaining to the Tommies, be it for their spiritual or material comfort, without receiving immediate sympathetic help.

So it was with all the padres of the Church of England. He took delight in recommending these devoted men for decorations to mark the country's recognition of their self-sacrificing services. The Roman Catholic priests, also, were on excellent terms with the High Command.

Writing of distinguished clerics and missioners, I am reminded of an amusing incident. A very high officer of the Salvation Army was received at Headquarters, and Sir Douglas drove him to certain huts and recreation

rooms to see some of the work that was done.

Certain members of Sir Douglas's staff accompanied them. On the way, they had to walk through the camp of a division newly arrived from home. Word had rapidly passed around that the Field-Marshal Commander-in-Chief was about. All the guards were on the alert.

At the general's quarters Sir Douglas introduced the Salvation Army Commissioner to the divisional-general, and an officer was attached to take the Salvationist round the camp.

Seeing this imposing figure, resplendent in braid and gilt, the first sentry immediately thought the Field-Marshal had come, and yelled out :

"The Field-Marshal's salute ! Guard turn out !"

The guard tumbled out in a hurry, presented arms, and the bugler played the Field-Marshal's salute. Of course, the amiable Salvationist, not understanding the joke, smiled pleasantly and gave a good regimental salute in return.

The first bugle having sounded, every other guard throughout the camp was on the

qui vive. Before the Salvationist and the escorting officer arrived, the bugles were sounding and the guards were out with presented arms.

Later the mistake was made known—unfortunately!

It would have been better if they had all remained in ignorance, because, a little later, Sir Douglas and the divisional-general and their staffs walked through the lines, but the sentry on the first quarter-guard was not to be caught out another time. He merely stood at his post with arms presented as though to salute a field-officer.

The divisional-general stood and frowned:

"Don't you know your duties?" he asked the nervous sentry.

"Guard turn out!" called the man. Instantly the sergeant of the guard appeared and had his men out immediately, and once again the Field-Marshal's salute was played.

From the end of the row of tents, where the next quarter-guard was stationed, came shrieks of ribald laughter; the Tommies up there thought the first guard had been caught again.

The major-general commanding the division

had practically to turn out every guard, much to his intense annoyance, because he had just been telling Sir Douglas how excellently his division was trained.

"The guards seem to be singularly lacking in a sense of their duties!" commented the Field-Marshal. I saw the major-general bite his lip with vexation, and I knew there would be a whole pack of trouble for those unfortunate Tommies by the time the divisional wrath had filtered down to the colonels.

Later that night the solution was forthcoming, and Sir Douglas laughed almost as much as the escorting officer who had accompanied the Salvationist, and who was now sent by the divisional-general to explain to Sir Douglas.

"Does the Commissioner know?" he asked, referring to the Salvationist, who held that rank, whatever it is.

"No, sir!" replied the officer.

"Then for Heaven's sake don't tell him!" said Haig. "It's the best joke I've heard for ages!"

CHAPTER XVII

THE MULE SPOILT IT

THE late Field-Marshal was most careful to avoid any possible ground for scandal in connection with the women workers in France.

The leaders of the Waacs were invariably women of considerable standing and, in every sense, above reproach. Partly to satisfy them, but more to satisfy the Commander-in-Chief, all sorts of most stringent rules were laid down governing the conditions under which they lived. The billets of the Waacs were guarded by a permanent guard of military police. They were not permitted to admit Tommies to their quarters and strict rules covered every minute of their time on duty or off.

Nevertheless, for all the rules of the Powers-That-Be, the Waacs met soldiers at out-of-the-way places, and many a romance

between members of the two branches of the service began in France.

Reports were frequently being received about soldiers meeting the Waacs against rules, but I am afraid the poor Waacs got the major part of the blame. Regimental officers looked with lenient eyes on love affairs of the Tommies under their control.

Nevertheless, Sir Douglas Haig was such a stickler for the absolutely conventional that I am certain if he had had his way there would have been no Waacs within reach of the Tommies at all. He certainly did all he could to prevent a mixing of the sexes.

There was an occasion when there was a large camp of Waacs near where our headquarters were for the time being. One night Sir Douglas happened to stop near the entrance to their quarters to speak to a staff officer. Quite near them was the entry, above which was placed a lamp, and on the gate two military policemen kept guard.

While Sir Douglas spoke to the staff officer he noticed a couple of men in uniform come up to the gateway. A whispered conversation took place between the men and the police

on the gate. Something was passed into the hands of the police, and the men went inside.

Sir Douglas and the staff officer continued to watch for a while. They were protected from sight in the shadow of a wall. Presently they saw other men come up and obtain entrance. Sir Douglas returned to his headquarters and called a provost-marshal to conduct an inspection.

A modified "raid" took place at once of the Waacs quarters, and there were arrested five officers, seven sergeants, three corporals, and twenty-one privates.

The next morning all these stood on the carpet before various tribunals and were remanded until their various superiors found out exactly how the High Command wished them to be dealt with. A full explanation was called for on all their parts, and each man had a very plausible story, but every story was different. Finally, it was agreed to accept the story that a birthday party was in progress at the Waacs headquarters and, unofficially, these men had all been asked.

Each man was dismissed with a severe warning, but the police on the gate were immediately relieved of their duties and

transferred to line battalions, which they joined up the line.

I heard later that some of the unfortunate Waacs fared worse at the hands of the women commanders. But women are always notoriously harder on the affairs of young people than men.

In recalling this little episode which took place in the dark, I am reminded of another episode, not without its humorous side, which also took place in the dark.

The relieving of troops in the trenches was always a difficult matter. Frequently reliefs took place by night, but however careful we were the Germans often got wind of the time of changes, and shelled the approaches to the trenches for all they were worth.

Quite close to the line Verey lights went up, lighting the country for hundreds of yards around, and on the communication trenches shells were incessantly falling, because the Germans invariably had the range to an inch.

It was the opinion of Sir Douglas that many casualties took place because insufficient precautions were taken against noise by the relieving troops. The Germans, who had excellent instruments for detecting sound,

heard the clatter of marching troops and opened fire.

Of course, there also was the trouble with spies, which in certain parts of the line we never got rid of. But this question of noise on the part of relieving forces Sir Douglas made a desperate attempt to get right down to its very minimum. So orders were issued of a most stringent nature, giving definite instructions.

Men had to march absolutely silently, and smoking was not permitted within three miles of the front-line on the way of communication. All entrenching-tool handles had to be tied to bayonet-sheaths, buckles had to be so fastened that there was not the slightest rattle. Nothing had to be carried that was capable of giving a sharp, tinny sound.

Field-kitchens had to travel with very low fires and funnels folded back. If the roads were hard, the mules' feet had to be muffled with old socks. No man had to have bright buttons about him or anything else capable of reflecting light. Officers were instructed to march in their respective places and not slip about the column chatting with friends.

The silence rule applied to all ranks. Having done this, Sir Douglas decided to go down to a part of the line and get as near as he could to the forward positions and see for himself how the new idea worked.

It was a very dark night; there was no moon, and very few stars. We drew up at a place about a mile from the line. At the point where Sir Douglas stood the road was open; one side of it, unfenced, gave on to open country towards a series of reserve earthworks. On the other side of the road was a grassy patch of about ten yards. Sir Douglas looked at his watch and judged that there was a quarter of an hour to wait until the relieving troops went past.

He had given no one notice of his surprise inspection in the dark, because he wanted to see exactly how far it was possible to carry out the new instructions, and it would spoil the chance of his getting an absolutely correct idea if he gave notice that he was going to be there. Every soldier knows what special efforts would have been made were it certain that the Commander-in-Chief would be about.

In the distance, we could see Verey lights

going up. Desultory artillery firing could be heard, but no serious bombardment. The occasional sharp crack of a rifle away in the dark told of the activities of some sniper, probably against scouting parties in No Man's Land.

The car was sent up a blind side-road, and Sir Douglas stood chatting quietly to his chief-of-staff. Presently we could hear a curious shuffling, muffled sound. Down the road shadows began to take shape, a line of scouts went silently by like the ghosts of a dead army—the sensation was weird. The head of the main body came, colonel, adjutant, company commander, and then the troops, all silently marching.

Perfect step was kept, and only the foot-falls of the men conveyed to the sense of the watcher that these shadows were really substantial. Behind the first company came a couple of mules loaded with ammunition and a field-kitchen. On came the second company, and they also marched silently. I saw Sir Douglas, standing well back on the grass patch, nod to his chief-of-staff, showing that he was highly satisfied, when suddenly there was a diversion.

From up the road came a positively blood-curdling scream. Only those people who have heard a mule turn "awkward" know what the sound was like. The next moment there was the sound of kicking and scuffling, muttered curses, and then a series of shouts, mixed up with a clattering and rattling as the mule came tearing down the column, scattering everybody before it and the ammunition from its back.

It was carrying the regulation load of boxes of rifle ammunition, and these soon shook loose and were scattered all over the roadway. Men tried to stop it, but it was hopeless—the mule had simply run amok.

Now, trouble with animals is an infectious thing. When the other mules, attached to the foremost field-kitchens, saw the stampeding mule they evidently thought they ought to be in this and began to "perform" also.

Men valiantly tried to stop them, but all to no purpose. With a rattling and clattering of a travelling tinker's van, the field-kitchen set off across country, the fires, fanned by the draught, shooting flames from the funnels. In a few moments, what had been a most perfectly ordered silent column

was a confused mass of scattered men, trying to keep out of the way of the heels—and mouths—of mules suddenly taken leave of their senses.

From the very moment the row started, the German Verey lights went up more intensely, and much more powerful lights were used. Evidently the enemy realized what was happening, for they opened fire on the communications. They started behind, perhaps about quarter of a mile back, and I began to think they had miscalculated the distance. Then a shell fell a few yards away—in front this time. After that they must have got a whole battery to work, for shells began to fall all around in open country, on the track of the flying kitchen, which presently came to grief, either as a result of a bursting shell or because the mules had dragged it into a shell-hole.

Officers were running about trying to re-form the broken ranks, and men were scattered to both sides of the road. In the midst of the scrum I completely lost Sir Douglas, who was carried before the force of the rush.

At last, still under heavy fire, something

like order was obtained and the commanding officer managed to open out his men platoon by platoon with intervals of about sixty yards to a hundred, kept in touch by scouts.

This is a perfectly correct movement when under artillery fire, except that the distances should be two hundred yards, the theory being that about two hundred yards marks the extreme limit of the effective range of bursting shrapnel.

But the trouble on this night was that the movement had to be carried out in the dark, under fire, and Sir Douglas said afterwards that far more time was taken to open out than would have served to march the battalion straight ahead by column of route. There were sixty casualties, and of these thirty-seven were in open country away from the road.

Apart from this most unpleasant baptism of fire—this was a new battalion just out from home—the unfortunate men had a worse ordeal to come. All that week, a gentle four- or five-miles-an-hour wind blew from the German lines, and our poor fellows were positively living in their gas-masks. The

Germans were putting gas-waves over every day and sometimes at night.

On the Sunday morning, from six to seven o'clock, the Germans put down a terrific drum-fire barrage over a five-mile front, including the sectors held by the battalion whose arrival I had watched. At seven o'clock the enemy attacked. After a weary week, suffering many casualties from bombs and gas, our fellows were tired out, but they fought gamely. The Germans met with a steady resistance, but the cost was terrible. At last, the enemy reached our reserve trenches, having penetrated about a quarter of a mile. There they wrecked everything before them, destroyed the observation station and battalion headquarters, and actually put a bomb in the medical officer's field dressing-station.

By this time the nerves of the army were tingling, so to speak. Telegraphs were working and reserves dashed up. By nine o'clock, where we previously had a battalion there was a brigade waiting, and by eleven o'clock our counter-attack began. We took back every inch of the line and actually penetrated part of the German trenches.

But the unfortunate battalions which held up the enemy at the outset suffered tremendously. The battalion whose troubled entry Sir Douglas had watched came out of the line with about three hundred sound man.

A long time afterwards I was riding with Sir Douglas over the same ground—I always remember places to the very inch. On the other side of him, and level with him was riding an aide-de-camp. I, who always rode behind, was riding level for the moment because he asked me a question about the whereabouts of a signal station. After I had given him the information I said:

"I beg your pardon, sir, but this is where the mule stampeded that night, you remember."

"What?" he replied. "Oh! yes, I remember. This is the place, is it? Yes, I recognize it now. H'm! Very expensive lark that was on the part of the mule, too. I wonder what made it stampede, Secrett?"

"Begging your pardon, sir!" I replied, "my idea is that it had an instinct of trouble to come. It was during that battalion's week in the trenches that the attack came and they were badly cut up. The mule sensed it

and conveyed the danger to the other mules."

The aide on the other side smiled broadly, and Sir Douglas turned to him with a faint smile :

"I wouldn't put that down as an idle superstition, if I were you," he said. "One can't say that Secrett is right, but I certainly wouldn't say that he is wrong. I know enough about horses to credit them with very mysterious instincts, and mules are even more sensitive in some respects."

CHAPTER XVIII

VISITORS TO G.H.Q.

DURING the period in which the late Field-Marshal Haig was Commander-in-Chief of the British forces in France, many distinguished visitors came to Headquarters, including Their Majesties the King and Queen, the Prince of Wales, and foreign Royalties, great statesmen and diplomats, and special arrangements were made for their accommodation. As a rule, they stayed at a château quite near Haig's headquarters train. There were three châteaux near the places where Headquarters were at different times, which were used as guest houses.

Very rarely did visitors actually stay on the train, although there was ample accommodation for them there. Among those who did stay on the train were Generals Botha and Smuts—both very close friends of Lord Haig—and the Prince of Wales.

I well remember the Prince arriving. He looked about him in his genial way, and then exclaimed :

"Jolly fine place you've got here !"

A great deal of perturbation had been caused by the Prince at various headquarters along the line. Of course, the presence of the heir-apparent was a tremendous responsibility for the generals with whom he was quartered from time to time, and, because of this, I think they placed considerable restrictions on his movements. The Prince, who was a sportsman and liked to move about freely, resented this very much.

His first serious duty of the day was to lose the detective of the Special Branch told off to keep him under protective surveillance. He became very expert in that direction. I have seen a harassed detective chasing about all over the place on the trail of the Prince, who had managed to slip off.

I think when he came to us for a week he expected Lord Haig to put him under great restriction of movement, but he was pleasantly surprised to find that the Field-Marshal did nothing of the sort. I heard one of the generals discussing the matter with Lord

Haig one day, and I think he suggested a definite itinerary for the Prince which would present the least degree of risk :

"Not a bit !" replied Sir Douglas. "He knows my wishes, and he is old enough to have discretion. You must leave the rest to him. I certainly will do no more."

I am quite certain that the Prince respected the wishes of the Field-Marshal. Sir Philip Sassoon (Sir Douglas's private secretary) and the Prince were fast friends, and when it was possible for Sir Philip to leave his onerous duties, he accompanied the Prince about.

Another great friend of the Prince's was the late General Sir John Cowans, whose genial personality greatly attracted the heir to the throne.

The Prince went about pretty much as he liked ; he visited hospitals, talked to Tommies, went up to the big gun positions, and generally managed to get back at night in time for the mess dinner. He was pleasantly informal and entirely without that excessive dignity one would expect or at any rate consider natural in so high a personage. He preferred to be treated as an ordinary staff officer. He certainly had much less

"edge" than many of the junior members of the staff.

His jokes were proverbial. Many a time the various servants found it extremely difficult to restrain a smile when the Prince was present. And this was a very necessary proceeding, for the late Field-Marshal, though a good-natured personage, did not like to see servants smirking about the room in which he sat.

His Majesty the King stayed at the château adjoining Headquarters but lunched on the train on several occasions. One memorable occasion was when he had his accident. That day a special lunch had been prepared for twelve o'clock to permit His Majesty to fulfil a number of engagements in the afternoon.

All was prepared, and we were awaiting the arrival of the cars containing the King's party, when news came that something serious had happened. The first reports were very sketchy. We heard that an aeroplane had dropped a bomb and that the King was badly injured. Then more reassuring news came that it was a horse accident, but still we thought that the King was badly hurt,

and a gloom fell upon Headquarters like on that other memorable occasion when the news of Kitchener's death came through.

Then, last of all, came the exact news. The King had been mounted upon one of Haig's horses, a beautiful mare which I had ridden many times. This animal was a very excellent horse but required a bit of management. She was liable to get a little fractious.

The ground was muddy and slippery when the King, accompanied by Sir Douglas and their suite, rode on to the ground to inspect a division of troops. The drums rolled for the Royal Salute, and the mare, nervous, reared. The movement was so unexpected that His Majesty involuntarily pulled at the reins for a second instead of tapping the mare between the ears with his crop to send her down again.

The movement on the reins, allied with the slippery condition underfoot, was just sufficient to overbalance her, and she came over backwards, pinning the King underneath.

I am told by staff officers who were there that the horror felt by everybody was unimaginable. Instantly there was a rush to free His Majesty. The inspection had to be

abandoned, and the King was taken on an ambulance to a hospital for immediate treatment.

He was found to be suffering from severe bruises, and as it was feared that there might be some internal complications he was put under the X-Rays. It was found, however, that the main trouble was bruising, very painful, but, unless complications set in, not dangerous, so he was placed on the hospital train with the ordinary Tommies and travelled down to the coast.

It was typical of His Majesty that, bruised as he was, and suffering intolerable pain, he had thought for those about him. He saw opposite to him a poor chap very badly injured, and calling his aide-de-camp, the King took from him a Military Medal and, leaning over, pinned it on the jacket of the wounded Tommy!

All the Tommies who travelled down with King George upon that occasion were loud in their praises of the King's fortitude and humanity.

Though it was not in his nature to crack jokes like the Prince of Wales, the King, nevertheless, was a very genial guest at

Headquarters. He would always have a pleasant word for the staff when he came in contact with them, and expressed his gratitude for what was done for him.

Her Majesty and Princess Mary stayed nearly a fortnight at the château headquarters on a series of visits to hospitals and Y.M.C.A. hostels and huts.

They lunched with the Field-Marshal on the train, and I have a series of the menus we used upon those great occasions.

Another very welcome visitor was Mr. Asquith, then Prime Minister and later Lord Oxford. Mention has been made elsewhere of Lord Haig's distrust of the politicians. There is no doubt he suffered tremendously during the years in France on account of political intrigues. But one point should be borne in mind. It has been said that when Lord French and other important personages conspired to change the Government in London, Sir Douglas was a party to the intrigue.

Nothing could be farther from the truth.

The late Field-Marshal had a deep affection and great respect and admiration for Mr.

Asquith, as I have heard him say upon many occasions.

"Asquith is the only one of the lot that can be absolutely trusted!" are words I have heard not once but several times. There was a great personal affection and understanding between the two men. Each knew the other for a perfectly loyal friend. That I know to be an absolute fact.

Mr. Asquith was the soul of tact. He knew that Sir Douglas, who always had a pleasant word for the staff, did not encourage long conversations between the servants and those high in authority. Mr. Asquith, on the other hand, liked to hear exactly what everybody felt about things, and he took such a kindly interest in everyone he talked to that respectful conversation became easy. So he used to excuse himself from Sir Douglas's presence at times and just stroll around, having a chat with Tom, Dick, and Harry. He took down all our names and sent us each a little present. His treatment of the wounded was that of a real and most sympathetic friend. Without gushing, he was as tender as a priest, and he certainly made a friend of every Tommy to whom he spoke.

Irrespective of politics, I am pretty certain that every Tommy who met Mr. Asquith in France became a firm supporter of his.

When a number of other people were there, Mr. Asquith seemed to be rather reserved. He talked in generalities, but always gave the impression of keeping something back. When the late Field-Marshal and he were alone, it was a different matter. Then you could see plainly that the two men were very close friends indeed. No greater friendship ever existed between a Prime Minister and the Commander in the Field than that between Mr. Asquith and Sir Douglas Haig! There were never any differences between the then Prime Minister and Sir Douglas, and I know for a fact that when he fell Sir Douglas expected and prepared for very great changes indeed.

Of a different sort was Sir Harry Lauder, also an honoured visitor on Sir Douglas's train.

Sir Harry had been entertaining the troops and was received and thanked by Sir Douglas for his very great service. Out of consideration for them, Sir Douglas managed to get a Scottish Brigade moved to a place where

they could hear their great countryman sing. Sir Douglas attended the concert in the huge marquee and took the chair for Sir Harry!

There was something almost of the atmosphere of a Welsh revival about that concert.

Sir Harry sang "I Love a Lassie", and, in silence profound, that great company listened breathless to the first verse and the chorus; then from thousands of throats came the chorus, led by Harry Lauder with tears in his eyes and a little catch in his voice.

Some of these lads had recently been through hell, and very soon would be back there, but to-night the moors and mists of old Scotland seemed to have broken through the space and surrounded her sons. Grand old war-songs of the Highlands followed; then, in lighter vein, "Stop your tickling Jock".

Few dry eyes were in that great concourse of Scotsmen when Sir Harry led "Auld Lang Syne"!

Sir Harry asked every man at Headquarters religiously if he was a Scotsman, and seemed just a little disappointed when he found a Southerner there.

He stayed two nights, and then went on with his good work of cheering up the Tommies. Anybody who had seen the inspiring effect of Sir Harry on the Jocks on the night of that concert I was privileged to attend, would have agreed with me that he deserved his knighthood.

The Navy visited the Army in the person of Sir David Beatty, as he was then. Beatty came to Headquarters and went round with Sir Douglas, visiting forward posts and hospitals.

The Admiral of the Fleet was very impressed with all he saw, and spoke to many Tommies on the roads and in the hospitals. He saw some action at one part of the line and came under pretty heavy shell-fire.

One night, after dinner, he was sitting with Sir Douglas and a number of high officers of the general staff, when, quite innocently, he made a somewhat naïve remark :

"You know," he said, "my greatest job is to keep my fellows amused !"

Of course, he was perfectly right. No doubt the long, weary watches in the North Sea and no action were just as trying in

their way as the Army's overcrowded and nerve-racked days.

But to the officers who listened to him the remark seemed almost too terrible for words! Their men, poor fellows, were doing double shifts in water-logged trenches, enduring fire and gas and vermin and bomb and bullet, and every fell thing which war involves!

There was plenty to keep our fellows "amused"!

CHAPTER XIX

MORE VISITORS TO G.H.Q.

I HAVE already mentioned what a high opinion the late Field-Marshal Haig held of Mr. Asquith, and I have also said how he distrusted politicians. Yet this sweeping statement must be qualified to some extent. There were some politicians for whom Lord Haig had a great respect. Both as soldiers and politicians, for instance, he had a tremendous regard for the powers of Generals Botha and Smuts. He considered them to be true patriots, able administrators, and in the broadest sense Imperialists.

At home, his next favourite amongst British politicians to Mr. Asquith was the late Lord Haldane. Sir Douglas considered the ex-Chancellor nothing less than a genius. Over and over again I have heard him say that but for the genius of Lord Haldane in reorganizing the Army and founding the

Territorial Army out of the old Volunteers, we could not have taken an effective part in the World War. It would have been over before our intervention would have been felt and, of course, Germany would have won hands down.

Lord Haldane came to Headquarters to visit Lord Haig. My recollections of the genial old philosopher are not extensive, but they are very kindly ones. Lord Haldane shook hands with me and thanked me for the attention I had given him, and said that it must be a nuisance for us to be pestered with civilians at Headquarters. I told him that it was not so at all and that I was honoured to serve him.

He asked me what branch of the Army I had served in before I became Lord Haig's servant, and I told him the cavalry—the Eighth Lancers.

"Ah, yes!" he said. "The cavalry. We almost forget the existence of cavalry nowadays, don't we? But it is not the first time in the history of war that cavalry have been eclipsed, and yet they have always come into their own again—the horsemen!" And then he proceeded to tell me in simple terms the

history of the horse in warfare. He went right back to the Egyptian and Chaldean days—the part the horse played in the Grecian and Roman wars, its eclipse in siege warfare, and its reappearance in the Crusades. He talked for perhaps twenty minutes on the subject of cavalry. His talk would have made a lecture that would have delighted the heart of any soldier, particularly an old cavalryman, and yet it was couched in such simple terms that any schoolboy would have understood everything he said. He had his dates and particulars all off by heart, and was thrillingly interesting. More than that, Lord Haldane did not give the impression of talking down to one. It was apparent that he thoroughly enjoyed telling his story, and he seemed to sense one's appreciation.

Upon the occasion of his visit, I remember there was an eminent French scientist present at dinner. This gentleman had been responsible for some of the most deadly high explosives in use by the French Army. After dinner, the talk turned on explosives. There were three British experts there—men who had given their lives to a study of explosives. After several had

spoken, Lord Haldane, as though the most natural thing in the world, entered the conversation and talked on explosives, their origin, their potential powers, and their possible development, for over half an hour.

He held his audience spellbound, and afterwards the French scientist was the first to express his unbounded pleasure at having listened to so erudite a dissertation.

Deeply learned and very, very considerate, I would say of Lord Haldane. Sir Douglas Haig's opinion of him can best be measured from an incident that happened when the Armistice was two years old.

Lord Haig had finished his great work on the War, and he wrote in a set of the volumes which he personally took in his hand to present to Lord Haldane at his house in Queen Anne's Gate :

"To Lord Haldane, the greatest War Minister England ever had, who, more than any other man, won the War !"

Even in the days when Lord Haldane visited Sir Douglas at the Front and when obloquy and abuse were being flung at the venerable statesman-lawyer, Sir Douglas Haig said :

"They will come to regret every wicked and ignorant word of abuse they fling!"

And, of course, his words have come true.

Of a very different type was the late Lord Milner. I remember very little of him except that through a misunderstanding he got everybody into a little hot water. He shut himself up in his room, and when a servant went to attend to him he ordered him away, saying that he didn't wish to be disturbed.

The man left, naturally thinking that the statesman wished to valet himself. In the morning, however, Lord Milner made some casual remark about Headquarters being obviously so busy it was impossible to secure attention in dressing and undressing. Instantly there was a sharp inquiry and everybody more or less felt the effect. As a matter of fact, he certainly was visited by the servant appointed specially to attend him, and he sent him away. All that he had to do was to press a bell-push and the man would have been there again.

Lord Milner always gave the impression of being exceedingly preoccupied, and certainly had no time to notice those who attended him.

A very genial visitor of still a different type was Lord Lonsdale. The veteran sportsman was Haig's guest on the train, and from that base he visited many hospitals in the district.

Lord Lonsdale is a very remarkable man. He was absolutely at home with Lord Haig; he had a long private conversation, and showed great interest in the problems to hand. He was equally well at home with the grooms and the servants. He cracked several good jokes that are treasured memories of all who heard them.

But perhaps the most remarkable thing about this most versatile peer was the manner in which he could talk to the suffering in the hospitals. There, he was as gentle as a woman to those in great pain. To those able to talk and laugh, he sat beside them and yarned away of things to interest them. Never did he go empty-handed. He was as bountiful as a permanent Father Christmas. Money presents and presents of fruit, cigarettes, tobacco, flowers for the nurses and the wards—he thought of everything.

Lord Lonsdale was one of those great-hearted benefactors who had his light well

covered with a bushel. He visited, for instance, the hospital which contained a number of Border Regiment men—the men of Cumberland, his own county.

I don't think anybody could tell exactly what he did for those chaps. He left presents, he took the addresses of their wives and families and sent presents. Many a Tommy in France heard from home, soon after the visit of Lord Lonsdale, news which told him that a nice present had been received and that arrangements were made for the kiddies and the wife to go away for a little holiday at the seaside.

Moreover, Lord Lonsdale was most anxious to find out all those soldiers who had no correspondents at home, the poor fellows who were alone in the world. Very shortly after his visit many of these fellows began to get letters from "a lonely girl", or "your anonymous girl pal", or "a little girl who loves soldiers". The letters came in bulging parcels which showed great discrimination on the part of the "lonely girl", because the tobacco and the cigars and cigarettes were exceedingly well-chosen, and the tinned real turtle soup and the flasks of pre-war whisky

were not such as the average "lonely girl" would purchase!

The secret was never given away, but I know many staff officers who had a shrewd idea that a certain great gentleman and golden-hearted sportsman spent hours in his library writing letters which sent a thrill through the heart of many a "lonely soldier" —letters which were well packed!

These parcels were big enough to "ease the position" for a whole platoon.

Writing of very wealthy men reminds me of another visitor to Headquarters.

Sir Douglas was informed that Mr. "Jimmy" Rothschild had given a hospital in Paris, and he wrote and thanked him for his care and thought for the Tommies in Paris, at the same time inviting him to visit Headquarters, so that he could receive the thanks of the Field-Marshal in person.

Mr. "Jimmy" Rothschild wrote back that he would have been delighted to call, but as he was a private soldier at present on service he found a difficulty in getting leave, and therefore would have to defer the pleasure.

Sir Douglas laughed when he got the letter

and had arrangements made for Mr. Rothschild to visit him. Mr. Rothschild was informed that several colonels would be delighted to welcome him into their messes should he care to take a commission.

"Of course they would—did you ever hear of a colonel turn down a millionaire!"

But Mr. "Jimmy" Rothschild preferred to "soldier on" amongst his pals in the ranks, and because men are only human, whether they are Headquarters soldier-servants or not, many of us took our hats off to him metaphorically for his action.

Of course, we had Horatio Bottomley out also. He talked to the Field-Marshal, who thanked him for his services in recruiting. All the Tommies thought Mr. Bottomley a very great personage indeed. He visited certain hospitals, and I think he was shelled one day when he was up near Arras.

A great many soldiers in France were cheered and encouraged by the little talks with Mr. Bottomley. He was exceedingly generous, sending parcels and comforts of all sorts to many of the men he had talked to.

Another great journalist who visited Headquarters was the late Lord Northcliffe. In

appearance he reminded one somewhat of Napoleon Bonaparte, and a staff officer to whom I mentioned that said :

"You tell him that, Secrett, and you'll have a pal for life !"

He was quick in his movements, lightning-like in his gestures, and when he spoke a word or two seemed to be impatient for your reply so as to be able to get on. He gave the impression of trying to unbend when he talked to Tommies, but it was plain it was an effort to him. His right place was at the top talking to the directors—not sympathizing with the Tommies.

One peculiarity about Lord Northcliffe was that he would cross any conversation, no matter what, with a new idea if it had suddenly occurred to him. If some strong idea moved through his brain he would interrupt whoever was talking straight away, and address Sir Douglas. In this he seemed either consciously or unconsciously to follow Royal precedent.

His stay at Headquarters was chiefly spent in long conversations with Sir Douglas and higher members of the staff.

Ben Tillett, the Labour Leader, also came

out at Sir Douglas's invitation, and was thanked by the Field-Marshal for his services in speeding up munitions. He was hale and hearty with all ranks. He put on no "side" with the generals, and carried no airs and graces with the Tommies. Sympathetic and respectful to all, privates and generals, the Labour man won all hearts and left a deep impression upon the higher officers.

His visit was a great success, and I think he was able to take back to England a clear account of the needs of our fellows and also assure the people at home that the men were being well looked after.

Very soon after Sir Douglas took command he appealed to the home authorities to let him have a first-class railway man. When he took over from Lord French the railways and communications were in a deplorable condition. There was not enough transport room for the armies in the field at the moment, and any increase would simply have spelt utter confusion.

Sir Douglas discussed the matter with various authorities on transport at Headquarters, but as no complete solution offered itself he sent home for a railway man.

That is how it was that Sir Eric Geddes was appointed. When he arrived he stayed with us at Headquarters and was given rank of major-general. The work Sir Eric did within three months in railway construction and organization was amazing.

He had lines laid, junctions formed, a simple system of signalling, and rolling stock over—it was a prodigious work, and Sir Douglas Haig was delighted. Sir Eric was very popular with his staff and with all the people at Headquarters. In some respects he has the natural military mind. There is no halting or hesitation about him. He does not tolerate mistakes but acknowledges speedy and efficient service.

For the fact that we were able to rush supplies and reserves about all over the place to meet the German attack of early 1918, and to follow up with our final series of victories in the autumn of 1918, we have Sir Eric Geddes to thank, who laid the lines.

I should also say that thousands of lives were saved by the greater ease with which the wounded were able to be moved about.

Another visitor to Headquarters was Sir John Simon, who was given a major's rank

and surveyed the whole system of court martial law. I suppose when he was done he made some improvements, but for the ordinary soldier his recommendations were too technical.

I do not think Sir John could be described as a popular visitor to Headquarters. Haldane was a great lawyer, but he was so genial that one forgot he was a lawyer. Simon was so great a lawyer that whatever geniality he had ever possessed was caught up and absorbed.

CHAPTER XX

A CANADIAN "INCIDENT"

NO record of visitors to Headquarters would be complete without mention of the various visits of Mr. Lloyd George.

Mr. Lloyd George visited the Commander-in-Chief upon several occasions. One visit I remember well he was accompanied by Mr. Bonar Law. Mr. Bonar Law was completely eclipsed by the more brilliant statesman, who could talk with authority upon almost any subject. Mr. Lloyd George could talk to the Judge-Advocate upon details of Military Law, to the Director of Ordnance upon Munitions, or to the Director of Operations upon matters of strategy. He was peculiarly active in mental capacity, and could get a grip on a subject almost as soon as he heard it outlined.

A great deal has been said of the relations

existing between Mr. Lloyd George and the late Field-Marshal. All I would say in passing is that there never existed the cordial relations between Mr. Lloyd George and Sir Douglas such as existed between him and Mr. Asquith. For one thing, Mr. Lloyd George was a great friend and supporter of the only general with whom Sir Douglas did not see eye to eye—General Allenby.

General Allenby and Mr. Lloyd George were what has been broadly called "Easterners", i.e., they believed that the War could be won in the East. They were intent upon moving as many troops as possible to the Eastern theatres of war. The Gallipoli gamble was supported by Mr. Lloyd George, who fully expected that the Greeks would take a decisive part.

The general idea was that if sufficient pressure could be brought to bear upon the Turks they would be defeated, thus completing a more adequate contact with the Russian armies, and then a drive up through Macedonia would bring direct pressure to bear upon Austria, who was never too strong, and quickly compass her defeat. Then from the East Germany would be attacked.

However sound the theory was, Sir Douglas was quite certain that the French, deprived of adequate support from us, would fall back—perhaps even worse. Certainly Sir Douglas was governed in his opinion by the French High Command, who were terrified at the thought of a weakened British front.

In the opinion of Sir Douglas Haig the Western Front was the decisive front, and he objected strenuously to any weakening of it for adventures in the East.

I believe there was a time when it was touch-and-go whether or not Sir Douglas resigned his Command in favour of Lord Allenby. But very powerful influences were brought to bear, and he remained, with the result that the Western Front remained the chief factor in the War.

But whatever differences existed between their opinions, Mr. Lloyd George was the soul of courtesy and respect to the British commander upon his various visits to the Front.

He was exceedingly affable and pleasant to all the members of the staff. Everybody knew what excellent work he had done at the Ministry of Munitions, and it is safe to say that Mr. Lloyd George was as much

admired and respected at Headquarters as he was feared. For, of course, everybody knew his views on the conduct of the War. It is a matter for the experts and the historians to decide who was right and who was wrong, but this much I know from what I have heard stated by high French officers—that if the British front had been so weakened as to make it impossible for us to attack on the Somme and thus relieve the French defence of Verdun, anything might have happened. There was a time when the French position was very, very awkward. The French armies were tired and out-fought, and many ugly incidents occurred in the ranks.

From what I saw and heard I think it correct to state that Mr. Bonar Law took the place of Mr. Asquith as a loyal supporter of the British Commander-in-Chief, and certainly His Majesty the King took a much greater personal part than has been yet acknowledged—also on the side of the late Field-Marshal.

Just about the time when Mr. Lloyd George came out upon one of his visits, the late Sir Ernest Cassell paid a visit to

Headquarters. Sir Ernest was another of those rich and noble souls who did much very quietly for the Tommies in France. At his personal expense he provided luxuries that only a millionaire could provide; he arranged for musical parties and concerts, and in many ways did many acts of kindness.

Sir Ernest was very quiet and simple in his manner. He expressed his personal gratitude to every Tommy he met, and made each one feel that he was, in the opinion of Sir Ernest, a very important person indeed.

Another visitor I remember well was Colonel John Ward, commonly known as the "Navvies' M.P.". Colonel Ward commanded a battalion which did excellent work in the various sectors of the battle-front to which it was sent.

Sir Douglas Haig had a great respect for the bluff colonel who, although not brought up, as it were, in the military tradition, carried out his duties with tact and generosity, was beloved by his men, and admired and respected by the High Command.

I believe Colonel John Ward knew nearly every man in his battalion by name or nickname, and spoke to them as informally as

though they were all mates in the same factory. The remarkable thing about that was that no one took advantage of it. On parade the discipline was perfect, and certainly there was no outward evidence that the somewhat unconventional methods of the big-hearted Colonel were a failure.

But, of course, the Canadian troops and other Colonial contingents had a very different idea of discipline to ourselves. General Currie, the Canadian commander, came to Headquarters to see Sir Douglas and stayed a day.

I remember that, although the need for men was very great, the Field-Marshal was afraid that the Canadian troops were coming over without sufficient preliminary training. Many of them had never served in any Army before, and frequently, although there was supposed to be three months' training in Canada, some chap who had just joined would manage to get himself smuggled through into a departing contingent in order to be with his pals.

The idea of completing training in England failed ignominiously. It was arranged that they should go to Salisbury Plain and

complete a fairly rigorous course there, firing their musketry course and completing the essential parts of the new Manual of Infantry Training.

But the scheme went wrong. The men probably were all accustomed to roughing it in Canada, but they were not prepared for the conditions of Salisbury Plain. As bad luck would have it, they ran into a thoroughly wet spell, the drainage was bad and their camp—canvas—a hopeless quagmire. The rain and the incessant mud and the new type of irksome training all combined to cause dissatisfaction among troops who had never had any idea of stern discipline.

So something like mutiny followed. The English general staff officers attached to carry out the training, instead of receiving the salutes to which they were accustomed, were booted out of the camp. By strategy, one Saturday night the troops were entrained for an unknown destination and shipped across to France.

It was, then, with this unpleasant record that the Canadians came. I know there was some idea at the time of splitting them up and using them with other units, but the

Canadian authorities strenuously opposed this.

When they got to France, however, and saw the conditions under which our Tommies had to fight, they buckled down to it, and if they never tolerated the same discipline as our fellows, they fought bravely enough in the trenches. Even the terrible ordeal of the first German gas attack at Ypres—an attack for which they were totally unprepared—did not shake them. They died by the thousand but the others held on, gritted their teeth, and showed the flower of the German Army what the Maple Leaf boys could do.

I must say their methods got the backs up of many old generals. I remember complaints coming to Headquarters of Canadian brigadiers seen drinking in sergeants' messes; of privates sitting down by invitation in officers' messes, and all sorts of weird irregularities.

A major on the staff was sent by Sir Douglas to investigate some of these matters. He went to certain lines where the majority of the men were out training. Only a few "details" were left in the lines. At the doorway of the sergeants' mess two horses were

tethered, one a magnificent stallion. The major entered the mess, and there, in the ante-room, were sitting round the bar-window three strapping Canadian sergeants, the regimental sergeant-major, the mess sergeant in his shirt-sleeves at the window, the brigadier general and his staff captain.

All had large pint glasses of beer—in forbidden hours—and all were laughing merrily at some joke.

The staff-major hesitated, but several of the group caught sight of him:

"This is the sergeants' mess!" called out the sergeant-major. "Do you want the officers' mess, sir? It's over there—straight across the square!"

Before the major could reply the general spoke:

"I know perfectly well why you are here," he said. "Will you have a drink?"

The major refused and would have withdrawn—it was an uncomfortable position for a staff-major to be in. To have to talk and argue in the presence of non-commissioned officers and privates was unthinkable to him. But again the general, a great big fellow over six foot high, detained him,

"Look here," he said, "I'll just explain the position." Then he proceeded to tell the staff-major that all in the room were close personal friends and workmates at home. The sergeant-caterer, now in his shirt-sleeves at the bar-window smoking a pipe and watching the altercation with an amused smile, was a multi-millionaire and owned tracts of virgin forest.

All these sergeants held some office under him. One of them was a manager of the steamboats used to transport the cut timber, another worked in the sawmills, the brigadier-general himself, an old sergeant-major, was the foreman of the lumber parties away out in the forests. The whole brigade had been raised and financed by the millionaire.

"And," finished the general, "of a morning some of us collect round to have a yarn and a drink with the boss!"

The staff-major, utterly bewildered, brought back his report. I don't know what Sir Douglas said about it, but I saw him laughing as he read it.

Some weeks afterwards the brigade commanded by the brigadier-general who was in civil life a foreman lumberman, went into

action and happened by bad luck to "drop right into the soup". A German attack began on the very first night before they had settled down. They warded off attack after attack. As it happened, immediately on their right flank the line was very weak; arrangements were in process for bringing some new units there. Had the Germans not been held up by the Canadians the line on the right would have crumpled. But the Canadians held on.

It was a day of great anxiety at Headquarters. New troops receiving their baptism of fire were a doubtful quantity against what they had to meet, but they succeeded. Not an inch of the line did they lose. By night reserves were up and a counter-attack was launched with considerable success.

When the reports came back to Sir Douglas, giving him details, mention was made of the giant brigadier, who had been running about everywhere, encouraging his men. With tunic and sword-belt off he had actually fought face to face with the enemy, a revolver in one hand and a great big riding crop in the other. His shirt was torn with German bayonets, and he had three slight flesh wounds.

Goodness only knows how many he accounted for. He had a bugle-boy running about after him recharging his revolvers.

He was just as unconcerned when he arrived at Headquarters to meet Sir Douglas Haig. His uniform was then spick and span, of course; his belt had a polish like mahogany.

He saluted his Field-Marshal with all the precision one would expect from an old sergeant-major.

"And you're a Scotsman, too, I'm proud to know!" said Sir Douglas, putting out a hand and shaking the brigadier's great ham of a hand cordially.

"Mon!" replied the other, "hae ye the Gaelic?"

I don't know what Haig replied to that, but he laughed, and with a hand on the general's shoulder led him into his private saloon.

A very great respect was felt for the Canadians by Sir Douglas after he had seen some of their work and met some of their men. After that, I noticed that whenever Sir Douglas drove through the Canadian lines men sprang to attention, even running out

of their way to greet the Commander-in-Chief. It was not the military rank, or the ceremonial, that they cared a toss about—they despised all that. No, the word had gone round that "Douglas Haig was all right!"

The lumberman-brigadier when he went back took with him the Distinguished Service Order and the Commandership of the Order of the British Empire, besides two French decorations. And when he visited Canada, Haig went out of his way to meet both the lumberman general and the sergeants' mess caterer. The positions were somewhat reversed. The millionaire was back in his great mansion, and the general was working in the forests in his shirt-sleeves superintending men, but they were all just the same good pals—and incidentally Sir Douglas was able to get some of his Legion men placed there!

CHAPTER XXI

EARL HAIG AND THE POLITICIANS

THE fights and feuds between certain generals and politicians throughout the War are thoroughly well-known. They have been written up with more or less accuracy by historians. But a general impression prevails that the late Earl Haig escaped this pestilential bickering on the part of politicians, and that he was singularly fortunate in having a completely-united Government behind him—a Government which he trusted and which trusted him.

As a matter of fact, the truth is far different. Lord Haig was such a tactful and restrained man that no violent outburst from him ever warned the public of what he was suffering from time to time, but I, who was with him every day without a break right through the War, and who had the very

great honour frequently of having his complete confidence, know something of what he suffered.

In many different conversations Lord Haig made it perfectly clear what he thought of the politicians at home generally, with their constant intrigue, mad advice, would-be interference, ill-informed criticism, and overweening conceit, but in the capabilities of Lord Haldane and Mr. Asquith he had implicit faith.

Of Lord Haldane, whom he greatly admired, Lord Haig said upon one occasion: "He gave us something on which to build. He leavened the Territorials with regular adjutants and sergeant-majors, he formed units capable of automatic expansion, and so ordered the organization of the regular Army as to make it fit in with Continental arrangements without the slightest friction. Great old man! When we win this war, he'll come into his own!"

I remember once following the Earl through two ante-rooms at a temporary Headquarters. His approach was unnoticed by some junior officers who were sitting at a table marking a map. One of them was saying:

"Yes, he even admitted that his spiritual home was in Germany. Wish to God he'd gone there!"

The Earl stopped:

"To whom do you refer?" he asked. The officer was silent for a second. They all rose to their feet and stood at attention.

"Were you by chance referring to Lord Haldane?" pressed the Commander-in-Chief.

"Yes, sir!" admitted the officer.

"And you are supposed to be attached to the Intelligence Department!" commented Haig with sarcastic emphasis on the word "Intelligence."

Of Mr. Asquith, I never heard the Earl say a word that was not to his credit. He used to say to his confidants:

"Asquith is the only honest one of the whole lot!"

I shall never forget Mr. Asquith coming out to Headquarters just after the battle of Jutland. He sat at lunch in our special train with Lord Haig. Later in the day he was to meet other commanders and the French Commander-in-Chief, but at lunch he sat with Sir Douglas, and they talked as old friends.

"Haig," I remember hearing Mr. Asquith say, "*The Iron Duke* waddled home like a shot duck. We've lost ships and men that we couldn't afford to lose. The whole thing spells ghastly disaster." He leant over the table and lowered his voice. "Compared to my expectations—all our expectations, it—was—defeat!"

Lord Haig nodded silently.

"Yes," he said presently. "I have thought since that the Balfour statement conveyed the genuine spirit!"

The ex-Premier nodded.

Then I remember the last visit of Mr. Asquith to Headquarters. Long and earnestly did he talk with my master, and after he had gone I heard the Earl say to another general:

"Yes, our fight is still to come. The Prime Minister told me to-day that someone has got a bee in his bonnet about the East. If ever the Prime Minster goes, I'll have to follow, just you see!"

The general expostulated, but Haig was very depressed that night and insisted that there was a scheme afoot to get rid of him. And so there was, as we were to prove afterwards.

Lord Haig liked to have a dig at the politicians, and whenever he got a chance he put them in their places. I will give two rather amusing instances.

I remember it was necessary to establish Lord Haig in temporary Headquarters near Ypres just at the time of the first battle. A house was taken near Hyenges—it was one which had belonged to a Roman Catholic *curé*! The staff officer who looked after billets found two prominent gentlemen established there. Knowing their political importance, the staff officer withdrew and hunted about for another Headquarters. When he made his report, I heard Lord Haig say:

"But I thought you were going to get that *curé's* house on the Menin Road?"

"Yes, sir," said the officer, "but—ahem—sir, Sir——"

"Shift him out of it—quick!" interrupted Haig with one of his very seldom outbursts of temper. The result was that I saw the knight pack up and leave.

Again, I must tell a story of a certain politician who became a positive nuisance. This man came out to France with the rank

of major. Strings were pulled for him at the War Office, and before he had been out five minutes he was placed in command of a battalion.

Lord Haig's wrath was very genuine.

"There is not a battalion on the Western Front," he said, "but could supply three better colonels!"

Then some sort of recommendation must have come out from the War Office suggesting that the politician be given a brigade, for I heard my master say to another general:

"This is the very limit—I won't have it!"

What steps the Earl took I do not know but nothing more was heard of the project of the politician's promotion. More, however, was heard of the politician himself. He frequently went on leave, and always following his leave inquiries of a vexatious nature were instituted.

Obviously someone was suggesting carelessness in certain respects at Headquarters, and, while these strictures were in no sense directly aimed at Lord Haig, yet a commander is always responsible for what happens below him, and they worried the Field-Marshal.

But the gravest troubles of Lord Haig were concerned with the constant differences of opinion between himself and a certain prominent politician who looked upon the West as hopeless. He tried for a while to get Lord Haig to take his view, and when he saw that was impossible he made a definite attempt to shift the Commander-in-Chief.

I heard Lord Haig say that, for a while, Mr. Bonar Law and Mr. Chamberlain were entirely with him, and understood the importance of the Western Front, and the great moral effect on the Germans should we withdraw.

I am certain that the whole Command in France shared his view. I know that when the intrigue was at its height, and it was openly talked between Lord Haig and his friends that he might be superseded any day, the French Commander spent anxious days at Headquarters, and after one such visit I heard my master say:

"The French will have a mutiny the day after any serious withdrawal on our part!"

I know that, over and over again, we had to send mobile columns to parts of the French line, not necessarily to fight, but to

be in readiness in case of a French breakdown.

I remember there was a time in 1917 when Lord Haig actually expected a French smash ! All plans were made for an emergency strategic retreat in case the French line burst in two places.

I believe this was only staved off at the time by deliberately circulating the story through the French lines that there was going to be a simply colossal British offensive which would wipe out the Boche for ever, and that there were hordes of Americans on their way to France.

"By Gad !" said Haig one night : "If they only attacked the French now !"—and he shuddered.

CHAPTER XXII

SOUTH AFRICA AND THE COLONIAL TOUR

IT was in 1921 that Lord Haig undertook a great world tour in behalf of the British Legion. He planned to visit the Colonies and deliver a series of addresses upon the aims of the Legion.

Only those in close contact with the Field-Marshal can appreciate what the British Legion meant to him. He threw himself heart and soul into the work, dealt with hundreds of letters per day, interviewed a great number of men every day, attended functions, and, though it was a great strain to him, addressed many meetings.

For Lord Haig was not a brilliant speaker. What he had to say was sound and wise, but he had a rather hesitant delivery, and I know for a fact that nothing would have induced him to speak from platform after platform except a great zeal for the welfare of the men

he had commanded. I cannot imagine that there has ever been another commander-in-chief in the whole of history who felt such a sense of responsibility towards those who had served with him.

One of the compensations Lord Haig had in these after-War days of strain was his tour through Canada and Africa, where he picked up old acquaintances and renewed old friendships.

Great pressure was brought to bear upon him to visit America. Invitations were sent from the most august sources, but he always declined. He considered his first duty was to the parts of the Empire which made up the Legion—which he hoped to establish as a great rallying ground for Peace, Goodwill, and Brotherhood between those who had shared the common peril.

In all these journeys of Lord Haig, as I have previously mentioned, none was more enjoyable and gratifying to him than his tour of South Africa.

We arrived, Lord Haig, Lady Haig, a maid, and myself, together with suite, in March 1921, at Cape Town, where he was met by the civic authorities and where a banquet

was given in his honour. Prince Arthur of Connaught, then Governor-General, and Princess Arthur, together with many famous soldiers who had served with him in France, greeted the Marshal.

It was here, in Cape Town, that the Marshal was gratified to renew another and humbler acquaintance. Haig was driving through the streets one day when a man cheered lustily and ran along beside the motor-car. Haig glanced at him and stopped the car at once:

"Hello, Hardisty," he said. "How are you getting on?" He put out his hand at once and smiled that pleasant smile of his which always dispelled nervousness and inspired confidence. The man approached and shook hands with him. This was a wonderful achievement of memory on Haig's part, because the man had not been in touch with him since the days of the African War, when he was an orderly in the Cape Mounted Rifles.

I, who came in touch with him in the old days much more than did the Marshal, would not have recalled him.

In all his speeches delivered in Africa,

ROUGHING IT IN NEWFOUNDLAND DURING THE WORLD TOUR

[*To face page* 268

Haig conveyed his great appreciation of the sacrifices she had made in the War, and emphasized his sense of an essential Union in the colony between Dutch and British, both of whom were to him equally good Africans.

At Cape Town a saloon car was put at his disposal for the railway tour. This saloon was luxuriously fitted and contained a kitchen, sleeping accommodation, and beautifully appointed sitting-rooms.

I remember a very good chap named Wilson, who was lent to the Field-Marshal as chef. I got to know him very well. He afterwards joined an American millionaire. I had a letter from him a little while ago, in which he told me that his master had died and left him fifteen thousand dollars. But poor Wilson's continual worry in the old days was that he could not tempt Lord Haig with any of the exquisitely prepared dishes of which he was so justly proud. Lord Haig was a very simple eater. Few people ever knew the continual martyrdom he suffered with his digestive organs. Oily and greasy foods were as destruction to him.

For breakfast he would have a boiled egg

and a piece of toast; for lunch a plainly fried sole without any garnishing or sauce. For dinner two small cutlets, perfectly dry and plain, and a little potato, followed by a milk pudding.

In matters of drink he was exceedingly abstemious. In winter time he would sometimes have at dinner a glass of burgundy or claret, or perhaps a whisky and soda. Then he might even have a small glass of liqueur brandy with his coffee. In summer as frequently as not he had a glass of water with his meals.

Frequently throughout the tour Wilson would prepare some tit-bit which he would recommend, but the Earl would pleasantly, but decisively, decline it.

We arrived at Kimberley on March 15th, where Lord Haig addressed a meeting and attended a civic luncheon. Here, again, he renewed acquaintance with comrades of other days.

At Kimberley, he visited several of the places sacred to the heart of every pilgrim who knows his history of Africa. These places, of course, included the Honoured Dead Memorial and the Rhodes Memorial.

In Pretoria, which we reached on March 23rd, Haig paid a visit to Mrs. Botha, upon which the Countess accompanied him. I know that this visit deeply impressed the Marshal, for Haig never managed to acquire that hardness and stoicism, amounting almost to callousness, which some Army commanders acquire. Casualties were always casualties to him, and the death of Botha was to Marshal Haig the death of a very dear friend.

We stayed at the house given by Rhodes for Prime Ministers of the Union for ever, with General and Mrs. Smuts.

This was a visit that Haig had been looking forward to, and again I had the pleasure of being greeted by the great African patriot :

"Well, Sergeant Secrett," he said, "you are still looking after the Field-Marshal." He laughed pleasantly as he shook hands with me. General Smuts was then, of course, Prime Minister of Africa. Smuts and his wife are very hospitable people, very kindly, managing to mix a certain dignity with perfect simplicity and unaffectedness.

I remember, for instance, seeing Mrs. Smuts personally "doing-up" the collars for

her husband—the Prime Minister! Many people would not understand that, but I did. There is a certain satisfaction in doing things personally, yourself, with your own hands, for those you regard highly. Do I not know!

The part of the tour which I personally enjoyed best was our stay with Sir Abe Bailey. We stayed with the great magnate at Muizen, and also up in the country around Colesburg at his hunting-box.

At Colesburg, Haig stayed from March 28th until April 11th, and had some excellent buck-shooting. He loved the rough shooting of Africa, and, had he lived, would certainly have visited the country again.

It was while we were up in this country that Lady Haig distinguished herself. Her Ladyship is a good shot with a rifle, but one day she brought off a hit which surprised me.

Under difficult conditions she took aim at a buck at extra-long range and brought him down—a feat that many men who are experienced hunters might well envy!

Sir Abe Bailey and the late Marshal were always great personal friends, and the visit to his place was talked of by Lord Haig for many a long day afterwards.

At Thaba 'Nchu, Peter Norval, the celebrated interpreter on French's staff in the Boer War, was presented to Haig. Norval's Pont was called after Peter Norval. Haig greeted him gladly, and wanted to know how he had been prospering during the years. Norval told him that he was farming, and, I believe, prospering. I remember Haig took the particulars down so that he could keep in touch.

Again, in Durban, Lord Haig met a number of old friends. A civic luncheon was given in his honour under the chairmanship of Mr. Councillor Fleming Johnston, and, in replying to the toast of "Our Guests", Haig made one of the happiest speeches of his life. He recalled old associations with Durban, and mentioned the names of men he had known as everybody else at table had known them, names which brought cheers to voices and sometimes tears to eyes.

Throughout the tour, Lord Haig was the regular guest of the ex-servicemen and, though he stayed from time to time with friends, he religiously held himself at the disposal of the board who had settled his itinerary.

There was not a single place along the whole

line of the tour but where the Marshal did not find some ex-soldier who he had met long years ago. At Bloemfontein, he visited the battlefields and Thaba 'Nchu, an impressive occasion this, for he stood shoulder-to-shoulder with men who had viewed these same battlefields from opposite angles.

The tour ended on April 28th at Cape Town. I have no hesitation whatever in saying that this visit was one of the greatest joys of Lord Haig's life. He had always admired and respected his one-time enemies, whilst he had always so conducted himself, and striven to govern the conduct of others under his control, so as to ensure that there would be no lasting bitterness between the South Africans and the British.

He had looked forward to a developing friendship with confidence. He had seen his hopes realized in the Great War, but now he had seen with his eyes the ploughshares which had been beaten from swords.

I heard two members of the staff, who accompanied Haig on the great tour, afterwards discussing the success of it. They agreed that whereas the whole tour was a tremendous success and served to strengthen the

Legion, the Earl enjoyed the African part best of all.

Perhaps the clearest idea of what Africa meant to Earl Haig can be given from conversation between two great generals who were waiting to interview him.

One said :

"I wish, in these days of chopping and changing systems and methods at the War Office, they would appoint Haig to be Minister of War. The Army at least would have confidence in him !" The other smiled.

"Haig is married to the Legion !" he said. "And, indeed, were it not so, I happen to know there is only one post at which he would jump."

"What is that ?" came the question.

"The Governor-Generalship of South Africa !" replied the other, who was, I may say, a very close friend of my late master.

CHAPTER XXIII

EARL HAIG AT HOME

AFTER the great tour Earl Haig settled down at the house on Kingston Hill. There he lived very simply.

For the benefit of his guests he kept a well-stocked cellar and was an excellent host. The Earl was always a stickler for having things done right ; nothing less than the first grade in anything satisfied him. In the Army that quality was well-known, and no slovenliness or slipshod work ever passed him. So it was at home, whether at Kingston Hill or later at Bemersyde. He was satisfied with the very plain things of life, but he insisted upon their being good.

The whisky, for instance, which the Earl kept was the best I ever tasted in my life. It was supplied from the famous Haig Distilleries with which, of course, the Earl was connected by family ties.

All his life the Earl was a worker. Even on his very short holidays he invariably set himself some task connected with military matters. Either he would draw out some new schemes or study some treatise of authority on things martial. He would also see to it that everybody about him was employed.

When his retirement came and he settled down I thought he would have given himself a rest, but, in my opinion, the Earl worked during the last years of his life harder than he had ever worked before.

Many hours of each day were spent in getting his book ready for the printers, and, in addition, the calls of the ex-servicemen made ever-increasng demands upon his time and strength.

The Earl's Presidency of the British Legion was a very sacred duty to him ; no trouble was too great for him to take, no person too humble for him to interview.

He many times expressed the bitterest disappointment that so many ex-officers and ex-soldiers should be out of employment and suffering in various ways.

Were it known how many cases the Earl personally investigated and made specific

recommendations to the Ministry of Pensions in their behalf, the general public, though conscious of the Earl's sincere fight for ex-servicemen, would be aghast! His labours were never-ending, and, without the slightest doubt, made great inroads into his reserve of strength.

The work for the Legion and the ex-servicemen increased, rather than diminished, as the years following the War increased. Then, apart from a terrific correspondence, through which he went personally and methodically, he had callers.

I have seen over thirty ex-officers call in one day. Sometimes there would be five or six sitting together waiting to see him. These men came without any appointment or without notifying their visits—simply called casually! The Earl very rarely refused to see each one! If he was on the point of going out or if he had appointments at home at that time, then he would send word out and tell the simple truth, but if he could see them he interviewed them individually.

They would bring voluminous portfolios of documents showing how badly treated they had been here and there, how they had

been let down by the War Office or the Ministry of Pensions or their employers. Always they had a long tale of hardship to relate, and the Earl listened carefully, took notes, and gave them what sympathetic advice he could.

Generally speaking, these men were "on the tap", some of them I dare say quite genuinely, but never a penny did they get from Lord Haig! That was one thing he would not do; he would never part with money to them. I have seen hundreds of cases where a man has told a most distressing tale, and wound up with a request for a small "grant in aid" only to be disappointed.

Two points must be remembered about that. First of all, if the Earl had given even a small sum to each he would have beggared himself, because there were so many, and I have a shrewd idea that if he had assisted financially there would have been still more callers.

I have known generals who were noted for that sort of thing, and their lives were made a misery. Good old Sir John Cowans, for instance, thought and spoke in terms of "fivers"—nothing less.

The first two men to "tap" him on any day could almost be certain of getting a fiver each. After that the General would say :

"No, damn it, I've gone my limit for to-day, old chap—sorry !"

The other point to be borne in mind is that the Earl was well aware that, whereas there were a preponderous number of thoroughly deserving ex-servicemen for whom he could never do enough, there were, at the same time, a small minority who rather presumed upon the various funds and the charitably-minded.

Though it did not necessarily follow, it was more than probable that a number of the callers were recruited from that minority. After all, a man required a certain degree of "face" to call on the Field-Marshal personally for a small loan, and generally the really genuine cases would not have presumed so to do.

What the Earl did was to pass on all particulars to General Ruggles-Brise, who carried out his recommendations. Let it not be imagined when I say that the Earl would never part with money that he was of very little help to his callers—far from it. Earl Haig would write personal recommendations

either to funds or to employers. He would promise his influence, and, if the caller was genuine, he benefited far more than he would have done with a small gift of money.

What was achieved by these personal recommendations of the Earl was astounding. I should say that thousands of ex-servicemen to-day bless his memory for actual personal favours in the form of influence and recommendations which served to establish them.

But all this was exceedingly wearing, and then, at the end of a day, having gone through several hundred letters and made personal recommendations on each, having interviewed his callers and kept his appointments, he would sometimes have to address a public meeting.

I am profoundly convinced that nothing less than the cause of the ex-servicemen would have dragged Earl Haig on to a public platform. He loathed speech-making and was not a brilliant speaker. He always had something sound to say, but he hesitated and stammered in delivery. He was almost what might be described as an uncomfortable speaker to listen to ; one wondered sometimes if he were going to break down.

These speeches of his were a very great worry to him. He spent a lot of time in their preparation and took endless pains to be strictly accurate in every point he made. He knew that his name and personality meant much to the cause he had at heart, and so he sacrificed his own feelings and placed himself unreservedly at the disposal of those whom he sought to aid.

When we went to Bemersyde, though the callers were fewer, I think the mail was even heavier, and certainly the calls upon his time were no less.

I must say a word or two about Bemersyde.

Bemersyde is, as everybody knows, the historic home of the Haigs. In the grounds, carved on a stone stump, is the legend :

> Tyde, Tyde, whate'er betyde:
> Haig will be aye of Bemersyde

I know there is a general impression that Bemersyde is a great Scottish castle, and most people think that when Parliament voted Bemersyde to the Marshal they had given him a great estate like, for instance, Blenheim, or Welbeck, or Clumber, or some other "stately home of England."

If they could have seen Bemersyde as I first saw it, they would have been quickly disillusioned!

Bemersyde is an old, very beautiful, low-built Scottish farmhouse. It is not a castle at all, or anything like a castle. The state of dilapidation in which the Earl found it may be imagined when I state that it cost him nearly six thousand pounds to make it habitable.

On one room alone, which he made his trophy room, he spent a thousand pounds, having the walls, which exuded damp and mildew, thoroughly strengthened and panelled in oak.

In this room heads of buck he shot in Africa had a prominent place, and here were housed all the trophies he gathered in his many campaigns, the whole forming a collection unique in my experience.

There, at Bemersyde, the Earl lived the life of a Scottish laird, well known to every farmer and gentleman, cotter and hawker, for miles around, and he had a word for each.

Occasionally officers stationed at the nearest

barracks were invited over to dinner, and the Earl always gave them an excellent time.

At Bemersyde some of his friends and personal staff of the old days visited him. I renewed acquaintance there with all my old officers at Headquarters in France.

The Earl did not have a very extensive establishment. There was the butler, a footman and myself, a lady's maid for her ladyship, a cook and three other girls in the kitchen.

Once or twice I have heard people comment upon the fact that the Earl was voted a hundred thousand pounds by Parliament, and in some quarters it has been suggested that it was a very large sum and perhaps disproportionate to the pensions of others—whom the Earl tried so hard to assist.

But I have always thought myself that if Lord Roberts, for whom, like every soldier, I have nothing but praise and admiration, was awarded a hundred thousand pounds, as he was at the close of the Boer War, then surely the same amount was not too much for the Commander-in-Chief in the Great War.

The two tasks cannot be compared.

Lord Roberts, with two hundred thousand troops under his command, made a triumphal march, rather than fought his way, from Bloemfontein to Pretoria—I was there. The work had been done by Buller before the grand old veteran came out, only Buller never had the men or the supplies.

After Lord Roberts had gone back Haig had still six months' skirmishing in guerilla warfare with flying columns up-country.

Imagine the contrast with the late War. There, the responsibility was terrific. The very life of the country and the Empire was at stake. The South African War was a cake-walk, a series of extended manœuvres, compared to the welter of blood in France and Flanders.

No, I think if the reward of the South African commander was a hundred thousand, no one can complain that my late master was given the same. There might be some who would consider the service more valuable!

I might mention that when Bemersyde was made over to the Earl, the fishing which goes with the estate was not included, and the House of Lords specially voted the rights to

with my future wife, or breaking with the Earl. What I felt about it is too deep to put into print.

When I told him he scarcely realized it. He hesitated, threw out hints, took them back, threw them out again, embarrassed, awkward. So was I. We each could read the other's mind like a book.

I know he was on the point of offering something that would have made the break unnecessary, but he could not bring himself to do it. I, on my part, could not bring myself to beg or even to suggest.

The very intimacy of the long years had made the ability to discuss a change of position impossible.

But I am thankful that we never quarrelled. I often saw him afterwards and arranged his clothes for him when he came to London, and what the Earl thought of me my testimonial is sufficient to show. And it is the Earl's opinion only that I care about.

THE END